FIFTH-GRADE TEACHERS’ SOCIAL STUDIES KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS
AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO CLASSROOM PRACTICES

by

Michele Harcarik

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This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the candidate’s dissertation advisor, Dr. Gail Burnaford, Department of Curriculum, Culture, and Educational Inquiry, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the College of Education and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

Gail Burnaford, Ph.D.
Dissertation Advisor

James McLaughlin, Ph.D.

John Morris, Ph.D.

Patricia Maslin-Ostrowski, Ph.D.

Ernest Brewer, Ed.D.

James McLaughlin, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of Curriculum, Culture, and Educational Inquiry

Valerie Bristor, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Education

Barry T. Rosson, Ph.D.
Dean, Graduate College

Nov. 16, 2009
Date
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ABSTRACT

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This mixed methods study investigates the relationship between fifth-grade teachers’ social studies knowledge and beliefs and their relationship to classroom practices. Quantitative data were collected through a beliefs and classroom practices survey and 60-item knowledge test covering the areas of American History, America and the World, Political Philosophy and American Government, and The Market Economy, in order to provide a comprehensive picture of fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, and self-reported classroom practices relating to social studies. Additionally, qualitative data were collected through individual and focus group interviews. These data were used to provide an in-depth look that expanded on fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, and self-reported classroom practices relating to social studies. The findings of this study indicate that there is a relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their self-reported classroom practices in the areas of resources, best practice, time, the Sunshine State
Standards, and personal interest. While there were no significant relationships between teachers’ knowledge of social studies as a whole and their self-reported classroom practices, there were several significant correlations found in the areas of American History and Political Philosophy and American Government. Further findings indicate that teaching experience and demographic variables, such as age, gender, and education level moderate some of these relationships. Implications and suggestions for further research are offered for elementary education, teacher education, and the field of social studies.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. I thank you for your patience over the years and for helping me along the way. The road was long and difficult at times, but you never questioned my reasons for pursuing this, you simply understood my passion for it and helped me in any way you could. Thank you to my mom, especially, for editing my work and helping out with revisions. Your dedication and hard work inspires me. To my dad, thank you for believing in me and for insisting, even when I told you you were crazy, that I would be a teacher one day. You knew, before I did, where my passion lay.

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Lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to anyone who is inspired to make a difference in education. Our contributions may seem small at times, but it is these small steps that eventually move mountains.
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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

In 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) into law, which called for increased accountability by states and schools. NCLB requires every state to set standards for grade level achievement and implement a measurement system to determine if those standards are being met. The law initially mandated standards in reading, language arts, and mathematics; however, in 2005, science was added to this list (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). Since the advent of NCLB and the emphasis on reading and mathematics, social studies is often the forgotten subject in elementary school (Bailey, Shaw, & Hollifield, 2006; Burstein, Hutton, & Curtis, 2006; Hinde, 2005; Passe, 2006; Wills, 2007). Since social studies is not a mandated subject by NCLB, many teachers give minimal attention to the subject (Burstein et al.) and some schools even promote decreased attention to social studies in favor of reading and mathematics (Vogler, 2003; Wills). Further adding to the problem, social studies is often seen as a boring subject by both students and teachers (Chapin, 2006; Owens, 1997; Zhao & Hoge, 2005) and is sometimes seen as being of little value to students (Chapin; McGowan, Sutton, & Smith, 1990).
In spite of the lack of attention social studies gets from the federal government, 35 states have standards for social studies (Quality Counts, 2007). However, due to the emphasis on reading and mathematics, states are often reducing instructional time from other areas in order to increase instructional time in reading and mathematics (McMurrer, 2008). Since the enactment of NCLB, 62% of school districts have increased the amount of time spent on English/language arts and/or mathematics while 44% of school districts increased instructional time in English/language arts or mathematics while decreasing the amount of time for other subjects such as science, social studies, and the arts (McMurrer).

With the minimal amount of time social studies receives, it is important to look at what is occurring in social studies education and in the social studies classroom. Two areas that have received attention concern teachers’ subject matter knowledge and teachers’ beliefs. Several studies report on subject matter knowledge of preservice (Ball, 1990; Fritzer & Kumar, 2002; Quinn, 1997; Thornton, 2001; Timmerman, 2004) and inservice teachers (Lee, 1995; Meijer, Zanting, & Verloop, 2002) with many reporting that subject matter knowledge is lacking for both preservice and inservice teachers (Fritzer & Kumar; Quinn). Pedagogical knowledge, or the knowledge of teaching, is often discussed alongside subject matter knowledge.

In 1986, Lee Shulman introduced the term “pedagogical content knowledge” referring to it as going “beyond knowledge of subject matter per se to the dimension of subject matter knowledge for teaching” (p. 9). Pedagogical content knowledge involves an understanding of the ways to transform knowledge through the use of analogies and metaphors, illustrations, explanations, and demonstrations that represent the subject matter in a way that is comprehensible to others. It also involves an understanding of how
students learn topics and what background knowledge students bring to their learning (Shulman). Many studies now emphasize a combination of subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge for effective teaching (McCall, 2006; Segall, 2004; Seixas, 1999; Shulman).

Of equal interest is the impact of teachers’ beliefs about social studies on their classroom practices. Most studies about teachers’ beliefs look at the effect of beliefs on preservice teachers (Chiodo, 2007; Fragnoli, 2005; Grauer, 1998; Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Johnston, 1990; Muijs & Reynolds, 2002; Nespor, 1987) and the effect teacher education courses and field experiences (Doppen, 2007; Doyle, 1997) can have on these beliefs. However, several studies look at inservice teachers (Christensen et al., 2001; Pajares, 1992; Wilson, Readence, & Konopak, 2002) and the impact of beliefs on classroom practices.

With the reduced time and attention social studies receives due to state and federal mandates, it is imperative for the field of social studies to understand the factors that may reduce social studies teaching, as well as those factors that promote exemplary social studies teaching. Teachers who have a negative attitude toward social studies, and who lack content knowledge of the subject, may be avoiding the subject or teaching at such a basic level that students are given misinformation or are left with misconceptions about the subject. Furthermore, a heavy reliance on textbooks (Adams, 1998; Passe, 2006; Puk, 1994) may also contribute to a marginalized social studies education.
Theoretical Framework

Shulman (1986) identifies pedagogical content knowledge as a blending of both content and pedagogy as a way to address both the issues of how a teacher should teach and what a teacher should teach. Shulman’s Model of Pedagogical Reasoning and Action describes how a teacher’s knowledge can be transformed for effective instruction (Shulman, 1987). Shulman’s model addresses six stages: Comprehension, Transformation, Instruction, Evaluation, Reflection, and New Comprehensions. In comprehension, teachers must be aware of their own content knowledge, which includes factual knowledge of a subject, knowledge of different interpretations of subject matter, and knowledge of alternate ways of addressing subject matter. Teachers must also understand the purposes for instruction. In transformation, the second stage of the model, teachers move beyond their own comprehension to understanding the comprehension of others. Teachers must be able to understand students’ prior knowledge so they can address students’ preconceptions and misconceptions, ameliorate students’ confusion, offer analogies and metaphors, and guide students through inquiry of the concepts of the subject. This includes drawing upon multiple forms of representation and alternative ways of representing key ideas. Teachers must be able to draw upon a variety of instructional strategies that are tailored to the students in the classroom (Shulman, 1987). The next stage of the model, instruction, is dependent upon the teachers’ comprehension of the subject which affords the teacher the ability to know and use the strategies available to effectively transform understanding of the subject to others. Following this is evaluation. Evaluation includes a teacher’s ability to check for student understanding and misunderstanding. Additionally, teachers must be aware of their own performance and
make adjustments as needed. The cycle continues with reflection. Here teachers must reflect on the teaching and learning that has occurred and analyze the outcomes, making changes as necessary. Finally, teachers should achieve new comprehension about the purposes, the subject, the students, and the pedagogy.

Teachers must be able to develop new ways of conceptually understanding what they know and must be able to transform this knowledge to their students (Shulman, 1987). Shulman acknowledges that not all phases of this model will occur at all times. However, teachers should have the understandings necessary to engage in these stages and to combine content and pedagogy in ways that promote effective teaching. Shulman’s Model of Pedagogical Reasoning and Action provides a clear theoretical framework for examining the relationship between knowledge and self-reported classroom practices of fifth-grade teachers concerning social studies.

Also guiding the theoretical framework are Evans’s (1989) five typologies of teachers’ conceptions of history. While these five typologies; storyteller, scientific historian, relativist/reformer, cosmic philosopher, and eclectic, were used to categorize secondary school teachers conceptions of history, they may offer a useful system to understand fifth-grade teachers’ conceptions of social studies and social studies teaching.

Further guiding this study is an understanding that teachers’ beliefs affect the way they teach social studies. Nespor’s (1987) four characteristics of beliefs; existential presumption, alternativity, affective and evaluative loading, and episodic structure, attempt to distinguish beliefs from knowledge. This study seeks to understand the beliefs that fifth-grade teachers have about social studies and how these beliefs relate to their self-reported classroom practices.
Many studies address understanding teachers’ beliefs about their students (Johnson & Hall, 2007) and their pedagogical beliefs (Snider & Roehl, 2007; Wilcox-Herzog, 2002) or changing the beliefs of preservice teachers (Angell, 1998; Doppen, 2007; Grauer, 1998); however, few studies seek to understand inservice teachers’ beliefs about a particular subject and how this relates to their classroom practices. An understanding of inservice teachers’ beliefs about social studies and how these beliefs relate to their classroom practices will add to the research on teacher beliefs and to the research on social studies teaching.

Statement of the Problem

This study examines fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge and beliefs about social studies and the relationship of their knowledge and beliefs to their self-reported classroom practices.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to learn about the beliefs, knowledge, and self-reported classroom practices of fifth-grade teachers with respect to social studies. Specifically, this study addresses the following questions.

1. What is the relationship between fifth-grade teachers’ beliefs about social studies and their self-reported classroom practices?
2. What is the relationship between fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge of social studies and their self-reported classroom practices?
3. Does teaching experience moderate the relationship between social studies beliefs and self-reported classroom practices?
4. Does teaching experience moderate the relationship between social studies’ knowledge and self-reported classroom practices?

5. Do demographic attributes moderate the relationship between social studies beliefs and self-reported classroom practices?

6. Do demographic attributes moderate the relationship between social studies’ knowledge and self-reported classroom practices?

*Significance of the Study*

It is well documented that social studies instruction is lacking in the elementary school (Bailey et al., 2006; Burstein et al., 2006; Hinde, 2005; Passe, 2006; Wills, 2007). It is imperative that we find ways to increase the prominence of social studies education at the elementary level in order to prepare students for social studies courses in middle and high school and to provide them a sound education in civics literacy. In 2005, the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), along with researchers at the University of Connecticut, studied the civics literacy of college students and found disappointing results. The researchers conducted a survey of approximately 14,000 freshman and seniors at 50 colleges and universities. Sixty multiple choice questions were used to measure the knowledge of students in American History, Political Philosophy and American Government, America and the World, and The Market Economy. The overall average score for seniors was 53.2% (ISI, 2007). In a follow up study in 2007, seniors again received less than 60% in all four subject areas (ISI). The results of this study further attest to the need for a more focused concentration on social studies teaching in school.
Teachers who have negative attitudes toward social studies, or who do not have the content knowledge to teach social studies, may provide their students with misconceptions or may contribute to a cycle of negativity toward social studies that continually passes from the teacher to the student. According to Dan Lortie (1975), teachers have an “apprenticeship of observation” (p. 61) that comes from having been students themselves. If we allow teachers to teach in the same dull and uninspiring ways in which they were taught, we will only continue this cycle. An understanding of the knowledge and beliefs teachers have relating to social studies may contribute toward a better understanding of how to design preservice teacher education courses that focus on changing teacher beliefs and providing content knowledge professional development to inservice teachers in this subject area. This study attempted to understand the relationship between fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge of social studies and their beliefs about social studies in relation to their self-reported classroom practices in social studies. Understanding the relationships between these constructs may contribute to the design of preservice and inservice education to include adjustments for personal beliefs and differences in content knowledge in the field of social studies.

The field of social studies appears to be under-studied and under-taught, especially at the elementary level (Cuban, 1991; Hinde, 2005; Passe, 2006). A focused study at the elementary level that looks at what is being done in the classroom may also encourage further research in this area, which may lead to a framework for effective social studies teaching at the elementary level and may contribute toward a greater emphasis on the teaching of social studies in the elementary school.
Benefits

Teachers who participated in the study may have gained a greater understanding of their own knowledge and beliefs toward social studies as well as a greater understanding of how this relates to their classroom practices. In turn, student achievement may benefit from this study as the teachers develop a better understanding of their instructional decisions related to their knowledge and beliefs. As teachers reflect on their practices they may have more of an awareness of their personal feelings toward social studies and their knowledge about social studies. This may prompt them to participate in professional development activities to enhance their knowledge or may make them more aware of the impact their instructional decisions may have on the students in their classrooms. The results of this study may also inform the field of social studies and the education of both preservice and inservice teachers. This may prompt new ways to look at teacher learning that incorporates pedagogical content knowledge into preservice teacher courses and professional development for inservice teachers. Finally, the school and community may benefit from the study as it will focus attention on social studies teaching and learning and create more awareness about social studies and the role it plays in classrooms and society today.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions are used.

Beliefs: The psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true (Richardson, 2003, p. 2). Statements such as “I enjoy,” “it is important,” or “it is essential,” and indicators that propose “should” or “could” will be used to elicit teachers’ beliefs.
Classroom practices: Strategies reported by the teacher that occur within the classroom that promote student learning (Eggen & Kauchak, 2001). The survey instrument includes classroom resources for teaching social studies (textbooks, and other print and nonprint resources), best practices (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998), assessment strategies (traditional and performance-based), and the basis for instructional decisions.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge: This extends beyond factual subject matter understanding and encompasses subject matter knowledge for teaching (Shulman, 1986).

Pedagogical Knowledge: The ways of representing and formulating a subject that make it comprehensible to others (Shulman, 1986).

Social Studies: The educational discipline of the social sciences that includes the study of history, geography, civics and government, and economics. This is based upon the themes that exist in the social studies standards in Florida for fifth-grade.

Subject Matter Knowledge: The factual information that a person has about a particular subject, as well as the conceptual knowledge inherent to understanding the subject (Shulman, 1986).

Limitations

Several limitations exist for this study. The first limitation of the study is that state policies may affect teachers’ responses to the survey and to interview protocol questions. Furthermore, teachers may feel the need to give socially desirable responses to the survey instruments and focus group questions.

An additional limitation of the second phase of the study, the knowledge survey and the focus group interview, is that the participants volunteer to take part in these two
phases of the study, which may indicate that they have a greater interest and/or knowledge of social studies. This limits the generalizability to the larger population.

**Delimitations**

A first delimitation of the study is that a single researcher performed the interviews and analyzed the data. This study also limits the participants to fifth-grade teachers in a large school district of Florida. The study is being delimited to fifth grade teachers because they are trained as subject generalists, unlike secondary school teachers who are subject specialists who have chosen their field. Furthermore, this study relies on self-reported data from fifth-grade teachers. Teachers sampled are from the state of Florida only. Additionally, there are several delimitations that exist within the data collection instruments. The beliefs and classroom practices survey only offers one open-ended response where the teachers can expand upon their answers or explain their reasoning. Another limit of the knowledge survey is that it does not have a geography component, which is a part of the Sunshine State Standards for Florida. Because of this, the knowledge test does not fully measure all parts of the curriculum as required in the state of Florida for fifth-grade teachers.

**Organization of the Study**

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the study, including the theoretical framework, problem, purpose, significance, research questions, benefits, definition of terms, and limitations and delimitations. Chapter 2 gives the related literature of the study, including the background of social studies, teacher beliefs, teacher knowledge, and classroom practices. Chapter 3 provides a review of the methodology of the study. Chapter 4
includes an analysis of the data while Chapter 5 presents the findings, the conclusions and recommendations, and further application from the findings.
Chapter 2

*Review of Related Literature*

This study examines fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge and beliefs and the relationship of their knowledge and beliefs to their self-reported classroom practices.

The review of this literature begins with a general overview of social studies, including the history and current practices in the elementary classroom. The focus then concentrates on teachers’ beliefs about social studies and teachers’ knowledge of social studies and the relationship of both of these to self-reported classroom practices in social studies.

*History of Social Studies*

The history of social studies is much like the field of social studies: ill-defined, widely debatable, and open to many interpretations (Barr, Barth, & Shermis, 1977). The debate about social studies centers primarily on when the term first appeared and what place history has in the social studies curriculum. There is often a division between advocates of history (Ravitch, 2007), and those who support a curriculum based on the social studies (Saxe, 1992). While the study does not aim to resolve the debate between history and social studies, it is important to understand the historical underpinnings of both history and social studies, in order to place the study in its proper context. The
National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) offers the following definition for social studies.

Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of 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 (NCSS, 1992, ¶ 1).

NCSS identifies ten themes of social studies that form the basis of their standards. These themes are: 1) culture; 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. For this study, the term social studies is used because this is the term widely used in the elementary school. This researcher defines social studies as based upon the Florida Sunshine State Standards for fifth-grade to include, history, geography, civics and government, and economics, with the largest section of these standards concentrated in the area of United States history (Florida Department of Education, 1996).
The Progressive movement of the 1890s occurred in response to some of the problems that came about during the time of reconstruction after the Civil War. As the country began to deal with industrialization, mass immigration, and the rise of big business, attempts were made to improve society and the life of the individual. Educational reform centered on the ideals of progressivism attempted to improve the quality of education and to increase access to education (Bohan, 2003). At a time when high school enrollment and graduation rates were low (Whelan, 1997), and an increasing number of immigrants entered the schools, the idea was promulgated that citizenship, cooperation, and social activism become the tenets of social education.

In 1892, the National Education Association (NEA) created the Committee of Ten to look at secondary education and make recommendations for the various school subjects (Bohan, 2003). At this time, approximately half of the graduating classes went on to college (Kliebard, 1986). Kliebard posits that the Committee of Ten was originally created to attend to the problem of colleges each having different entrance requirements. This made it difficult for schools to prepare students for the college of their choice. The traditional classroom of the time included courses in Greek, Latin, and mathematics. History was not a separate subject, but included in some schools within the classical subjects and in others as a part of a general history course (Bohan). The committee recommended a course of study that included an uninterrupted 8-year sequence of history starting in the fifth grade and continuing into college. The courses included general history, American History, Greek and Roman History, French History, and English History (Jenness, 1990). The Committee further sought to encourage new teaching methods, which engaged students beyond rote memorization (Whelan, 1997), and
emphasized better teaching through critical discussion, student participation, and the use of resources other than the text (Ravitch, 2007). While some suggest that the Committee of Ten improved history education, others criticize the committee as being elitist, saying that it, “sought to impose an academic education on all children” (Ravitch, p. 28). Still others suggest that the purpose of this historical study was to prepare students for practical purposes in life rather than for college (Bohan).

Several years later, the American Historical Association’s (AHA) Committee of Seven evaluated and made further recommendations for historical study. The Committee felt that their course recommendations should not just be designed for students going to college, but also for, “preparing boys and girls for the duties of daily life and intelligent citizenship” (AHA, 1898). Like the Committee of Ten, the Committee of Seven advocated critical thinking and encouraged less rote memorization (Bohan, 2003). Furthermore, they offered recommendations for inclusion of history courses in secondary schools and suggestions for minimum requirements for college entrance (AHA). Ravitch (2007) suggests that the Committees of Ten and Seven were reformers of history education, while others suggest they were too traditional (Bohan) with questionable value and application (Saxe, 1992).

A similar report in 1909 by the Committee of Eight (AHA) recommended historical instruction in the elementary school. The report encouraged teachers to tell elaborate tales such as a storyteller might, to help students “understand their society, and participate intelligently in it” (Watras, 2002).

Up until this point, the emphasis appears to be on historical study. There is a debate, however, about when the term social studies first appeared (Ross, 2001; Saxe,
Some suggest that social studies was evident in the reports of the committees of the late 1800s, which reflected the goals of the Progressive Era (Bohan, 2003; Saxe), and promoted the development of good citizens (Bohan). It is more widely reported that the social studies movement first came into being with the creation of NEA’s Committee on the Social Studies in 1916 (Jenness, 1990; Lybarger, 1991; Orrill & Shapiro, 2005), which emerged from the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education. An oft-referenced debate about the emergence of social studies (Ross; Watras, 2002; Whelan, 1997) occurs between Ravitch, an advocate of historical study and Saxe, an advocate of social studies.

Saxe (1992) posits that the use of the term social studies dates back to 1883 in Sarah Bolton’s book *Social Studies in England* and is seen in books by Heber Newton (1886) and Lady Jane Wilde (1893). Saxe further asserts that Carroll D. Wright, the first U.S. Commissioner of Labor and an American Social Science Association (ASSA) member, called for social science education in the schools as early as 1887. As education began to shift from the social sciences in an attempt to address social welfare in schools, the term social education began being used (Saxe). Saxe further asserts that the social studies movement gained credence from Ira Howeth’s idea of social study clubs in 1897. These clubs were open to all citizens and encouraged investigation of social conditions and inquiry into social questions. Also, in 1897 Edmund James, president of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, suggested using the term ‘social study’ to bring a study of the social sciences into the primary schools (Saxe, p. 268). Further extending his argument involving the introduction of the term social studies, Saxe cites numerous education writers who used the term social studies in their writings prior
to the Social Studies Committee report. While the 1916 report may have been the first nationwide report to create opportunities for social studies to become a part of the school curriculum, Saxe contends that the foundation for social studies emerged in the mid to late 1800s in response to the social welfare agenda of the Progressive Era.

Ravitch (2007), on the other hand, extols the efforts of the Committees of Ten and Seven, praising them for their emphasis on history while decrying the apparent decline in history that occurred as a result of the 1916 report of the Committee of Social Studies and the shift from academic school subjects, including history, to non-academic subjects such as citizenship.

In contrast to the debate between Ravitch and Saxe, Watras (2002), suggests that there were more similarities than differences between the goals of historians and social studies educators. Whelan (1997) also proposes that there is more accord than dissent between the Committee of Ten and the Social Studies Committee, and that Ravitch and Saxe ignore the areas of these reports that do not promote their own agendas.

As the 20th Century continued, citizenship became the accepted aim of schooling (Jenness, 1990; Ravitch, 2007; Ross, 2001) and the teaching of history began to shrink or even disappear in some school districts (Ravitch). Furthermore, as school enrollment began increasing, the need to promote vocational study (Ravitch) transcended the need to prepare students for college (Bohan, 2003) and thus led to the decreased emphasis on history and the increased emphasis on studies that prepared students for life (Bohan; Ravitch). In the 1930s, the history curriculum in the primary school was supplanted by the “expanding environments” curriculum, which is still used in many schools today.
This curriculum promoted a more localized study for young children that focused on families, the community, the state, and the nation (Turner, 1999).

As the century ended, Ravitch (2007) acknowledged the restoration of history, specifically with a new state curriculum adopted by California in 1987 and attempts by other groups, such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), to assess U.S. history knowledge of high school students.

In another attempt to address the role of history in schooling, the Bradley Commission on History in Schools was set up in 1987:

- to explore the conditions that contribute to, or impede, the effective teaching of history in American schools, Kindergarten through Grade 12.

- to make recommendations on the curricular role of history, and on how all of those concerned – teachers, students, parents, school administrators, university professors, publishers, and boards of education—may improve the teaching of history as the core of social studies in the schools (The Bradley Commission on History in Schools, 1988).

In regard to elementary school, the Commission recommended three patterns of curriculum alternate to the existing “expanding horizons,” also known as the “expanding environments,” curriculum currently in use in many states. The Commission criticized the “expanding horizons” approach as not being cognitively based on what children are capable of learning and understanding. The first pattern is loosely based on the “expanding horizons” approach but includes a historical basis for the younger grades and limits the United States history course in fifth-grade to one that concludes with 1865 instead of attempting to include all of history in the course. The second pattern, based on
California’s social studies standards, also utilizes the “expanding horizons” theme but brings historical, biographical, and literary materials into the curriculum. The third pattern moves away from the “expanding horizons” theme and focuses on history, biography, geography, literacy, and the arts (The Bradley Commission on History in Schools).

While the debate between history and social studies is ongoing, the newest dilemma now centers on the lack of attention given to the social studies, history included, which causes these subjects to be pushed aside to afford more attention to reading and mathematics. It might be time for social studies advocates and history advocates to stand together and create a more unified front that will help create a place in the curriculum for these subjects.

This study attempted to bring attention to social studies, including history, at the elementary school level in hopes that knowledge would be gained about the relationship between teacher knowledge, teacher beliefs, and self-reported classroom practices. What are the implications for teacher education, both preservice and inservice, in understanding teacher knowledge and teacher beliefs’ and their relationship to classroom practices?

Should a combination of teacher content knowledge and teacher pedagogical knowledge become the basis of social studies methods courses or does one supersede the other?

How should teacher education programs address the preexisting beliefs held by teachers?

This study may provide information related to the relationship between teacher knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices used in teaching social studies to inform policy both in the field of social studies and in the field of teacher education, both preservice and inservice.
Current Practices in Social Studies

Currently, the discipline of social studies is struggling to keep its place alongside the subjects of mathematics and reading. Since the onset of NCLB and the emphasis on assessing mathematics and reading, many schools are focusing their attention on these subjects to the exclusion of social studies (McMurrer, 2008). This study does not attempt to reiterate the neglect of social studies teaching. Instead, this study attempted to look at teacher knowledge and beliefs and the relationship of these to the self-reported classroom practices of fifth-grade teachers in their teaching of social studies. However, it is important to look at the current state mandates pertaining to content and assessment to frame an understanding of the field of social studies in elementary schools.

According to a 2006-2007 report (Quality Counts, 2007), the District of Columbia and all states, except Rhode Island, had adopted standards in the core subjects of reading/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. However, when looking at the core subjects that are assessed by each state, while almost all states utilize assessments aligned to state standards in reading/language arts and mathematics, only 35 states use assessments aligned to state standards in science and only 19 states use assessments aligned to state standards in social studies. Of those 19 states, eleven of them report using social studies assessment at the elementary level (Quality Counts). There is obviously a marked difference between the emphasis on reading and mathematics and that of social studies.

In order to determine the impact of NCLB on elementary schools, the Center on Educational Policy (CEP) conducted an analysis on the amount of instructional time devoted to specific subjects in elementary schools. CEP surveyed 349 nationally
representative school districts between November 2006 and February 2007. An increase of instructional time was seen in the areas of English language arts and mathematics, 58% and 45% respectively. Social studies saw the greatest reduction of instructional time, with 36% of districts reporting a decrease in instruction in social studies. Pre-NCLB, the average total instructional time spent on social studies was 239 minutes per week. Post-NCLB, this dropped to 164 minutes per week with an average decrease of 76 minutes per week (McMurrer, 2008).

While not the focus of the study, a comparison study that looks at the amount of time spent teaching social studies in a state that utilizes a social studies assessment with a state that does not, might be helpful in determining the impact of assessments on the teaching day. Furthermore, a qualitative study that explores the classroom practices of teachers who are successful at incorporating more time in social studies during the day may also help direct inservice and preservice education in social studies.

**Role of Social Studies in the Elementary Curriculum**

In 2006, Burstein et al. conducted a study in order to find out if social studies was being neglected in the elementary schools, and if so, the reasons for the neglect. The study further investigated teachers’ feelings about teaching social studies and the materials, methods, and activities used in the teaching of social studies. Some of the information obtained in a survey of 174 teachers was relevant demographic information about the teachers as well as the amount of time spent teaching core subjects. The researchers found that teachers spend most of their school day teaching subjects that are tested, such as reading and mathematics. Almost half of the teachers said they teach social studies for less than one hour per week. No significance was reported between the
type of teaching credential the teachers held and the time spent teaching social studies. Furthermore, there was no correlation between the number of years teaching and the time spent on social studies. This may warrant further examination, though, as the researchers note, 19 of the teachers who spent less than one hour teaching social studies were teachers who had more than 20 years of teaching experience. The researchers suggest that it is nearly impossible to meet state content standards in social studies if teachers are spending such a small amount of time teaching social studies. Of great importance, then, is determining what teachers are doing in the classroom when they are teaching social studies and whether or not their own knowledge and beliefs impact their teaching.

Another aspect of the Burstein et al. (2006) study focused on the reasons for the neglect and the materials, methods, and activities used in teaching social studies. In looking at the teachers’ satisfaction of teaching social studies, many of the teachers surveyed reported feeling dissatisfied with social studies due to a lack of time and the fact that social studies is not a tested subject; therefore, it has less priority over other subjects. Fewer teachers reported reasons for the dissatisfaction related to their personal feelings or comfort level in teaching social studies. Interestingly, in looking at materials and methods, teachers reported that critical thinking and a hands-on approach were important in teaching social studies; however, their reported use of materials and activities contradicted this as most teachers relied on textbooks, worksheets, and lecture. Burstein et al. raise an important question, “Is lack of knowledge or training to blame for the high number of worksheets and over reliance on lecture . . . or are teachers throwing aside strategies that take too much time . . . due to lack of time and district mandates?”
(Burstein et al., p. 19). This study, in attempting to determine if there may be a relationship between knowledge and classroom practices, may help answer this question.

In 2005, Burroughs, Groce, and Webeck conducted a tri-state study with 34 elementary, middle, and high school teachers to determine the perceptions of social studies teachers since NCLB and the implementation of state testing and accountability. Through surveys and interviews, the elementary teachers reported that they spent an average of 30 minutes a week on social studies. As with many other studies, the reasoning appeared to be consistent with the need to spend more time on the tested subjects. Teachers indicated frustration with the lack of attention social studies receives and the increased focus on the standardized tests. At the middle school level, the teachers appeared to spend more time on social studies, approximately 40 minutes daily (Burroughs et al.). This is more likely due to the fact that in middle school, each subject is allotted a certain amount of time by a particular teacher, unlike elementary schools where one teacher is responsible for the majority of the subject matter. Of importance, though, is the concern by middle school teachers that students are arriving in middle school without the necessary knowledge and skills in social studies due to the emphasis on reading and mathematics. Differing from the elementary teachers, middle school teachers expressed concern with the narrowing of the content rather than the issue of time. However, the concerns, similar to those of the elementary teachers, were due to the emphasis on standardized testing (Burroughs et al.). The group of high school teachers reiterated the concerns of the middle school teachers by also commenting on the lack of preparation of the students in social studies. Particularly, they noted that the students lack
the foundational lessons of social studies that should be formed in the early years of schooling.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) emphasizes the notion of foundational social studies development in the early years in their position statement, *Social Studies Education for Early Childhood and Elementary School Children Preparing for the 21st Century* (NCSS, 1988). NCSS suggests that, “if the early learning does not occur, the optimum time for some concepts may pass, making it difficult for students to entertain new ideas or think critically about old ones” (NCSS, section v, ¶ 2). While this statement may encourage social studies teaching in the elementary grades, rather than being a developmental issue, the issue might simply be one of exposure. A danger may exist that if students do not receive certain social studies concepts at an early age, they may not ever receive them. Secondary school teachers might assume that students come into their later schooling with certain knowledge about social studies, and therefore fail to take into consideration that they may not have had adequate exposure to the concepts that secondary school needs to build upon. It may be more prudent to argue that students need social studies concepts at an early age because this is an optimum time to engage them in the topic and help them develop an interest in the topic, rather than arguing that it is a case of development ability or readiness that only occurs in the early grades.

However, it seems that this early learning encounters several challenges. The first challenge in providing students the foundational lessons is finding a way to incorporate social studies into the elementary day in spite of the increased time allotted to mathematics and reading. A second challenge is ensuring that the teaching of social
studies provides more than rote memorization, lecture, and textbook driven lessons. If social studies is given the same attention as other subjects and teachers are adequately prepared to teach social studies, students may be able to gain the social studies knowledge they seem to be currently lacking.

Currently, many studies report that social studies teaching in the elementary school is dependent upon textbooks and teacher-directed lectures with little inquiry or critical thinking (Bailey et al., 2006; Burroughs et al., 2005). According to Burstein et al. (2006), teachers said that they think social studies teaching should subsume a hands-on approach that includes skills in analysis and critical thinking. However, lecture and worksheets were the dominant teaching strategies reported by the teachers.

In a study by Bailey et al. (2006), preservice elementary education teachers in two social studies methods courses served as paraprofessionals in 39 elementary classes. The preservice teachers used a weekly record log to record the amount of time spent on social studies, the instructional strategies used in teaching social studies, and the inclusion of technology in the classroom. Consistent with other studies, the amount of time spent teaching social studies was low and the paraprofessionals indicated that teachers taught social studies, “when, or if, they got around to it” (Bailey et al., p. 22). The forms of learning that appeared most often were group discussion and activity, reading the textbook and answering questions, and defining vocabulary words. The least used activities were inquiry and hands-on activities.

In an attempt to minimize the reduction of time spent on social studies teaching, some teachers have incorporated an interdisciplinary approach to teaching social studies. Burroughs et al. (2005) note that curriculum integration allows teachers time to “double-
dip” and incorporate social studies topics into other curricular areas (p. 18). However, social studies concepts might be sacrificed in the process since the goals of other subjects may supersede social studies.

Passe (2006) addresses the repercussions of neglecting social studies in the elementary schools. Passe suggests that teachers are as much a part of the problem as standardized testing because of the lack of interest and knowledge many elementary educators have toward social studies. Further challenging the social studies field are the methods courses and teacher educators that teach the methods courses. Passe laments the current practice of utilizing subject generalists to teach social studies methods courses and in some cases using social science professors to teach these courses. While Passe accepts that social science professors can be effective at teaching methods courses due to their extensive content knowledge, he questions their ability to appropriately instruct teachers who will be dealing with young children who have more diverse developmental needs than older children.

Perceptions of Social Studies

Many teachers and students hold the view that social studies is uninteresting and unimportant, further compromising the field of social studies in the elementary grades (Houser, 1995; Zhao & Hoge, 2005). In his study of elementary teachers and principals, Houser found that social studies was ranked fifth in importance after reading, mathematics, language arts, and science. One factor contributing to this was the view of social studies as uninteresting and unnecessary. A second grade teacher commented that, ‘Social studies is not one of my favorite things’ while a sixth grade teacher remarked that, ‘Social studies isn’t a priority. People just don’t seem to see a need’ (Houser, p. 158).
In a subsequent study, Lintner (2006) used Houser’s survey to examine school principals’ perceptions of social studies, the effectiveness of its instructional strategies, and the implications for its future. As in Houser’s study, the survey results indicated that social studies was ranked fifth in importance behind the core areas of reading, language arts, mathematics, and science. The results of the evaluative practices reported teacher made tests as the primary instrument and the primary instructional practices used were discussion and recitation. In the higher grades, 3-5, individual assignments and lecture were reported as more prevalent than the lower grades, K-2, where discovery and inquiry were more frequently reported (Lintner).

Fifteen randomly selected principals from the 111 who participated in the survey were interviewed and asked six questions concerning the importance and value of social studies, as well as questions relating to standardized testing in social studies and the role of principals and the state in promoting social studies. The comments from these interviews varied from social studies being seen as important due to personal reasons such as child development to practical reasons related to the implementation of a standardized test in social studies. The value of social studies varied from social studies being seen as promoting awareness for students to serving as a facilitator for other subjects. Most of the principals commented that the standardized test has brought attention to social studies, although they also mentioned that principals and the state need to show their teachers that social studies is important and provide resources for social studies (Lintner, 2006).

Lintner (2006) concludes that due to the implementation of a standardized test in social studies, the perception of social studies and the practices and promotion of social
studies is changing. However, it remains to be seen how and if the importance of social studies will change.

Zhao and Hoge (2005) used open-ended interview protocols to find out what elementary teachers and students had to say about social studies. Most students said that social studies was, “boring and useless” (Zhao & Hoge, p. 218). Interestingly, when teachers were asked about their own experiences with learning social studies, they had difficulty identifying anything exciting or memorable. While most of the teachers interviewed suggested that students’ lack of interest in social studies was due to the increased emphasis on reading and mathematics, the researchers suggest that teachers and their “over-reliance” (Zhao & Hoge, p. 218) on textbooks might be responsible. Furthermore, they posit that the teachers in this study did not provide students with a sense that social studies is important and they did not utilize the real-life opportunities that could make social studies more relevant to the students’ lives (Zhao & Hoge).

Brophy, Alleman, and O’Mahony (2000) suggest that one reason why teachers place little value on social studies or give it cursory attention is that many teachers are unclear on the purpose of social studies and how it should be taught.

Best Practices in Social Studies

Due to much debate over social studies, its definition, what it encompasses, and the differing opinions over what it should include, a clear agreement on standards and practices in social studies has not emerged. Zemelman et al. (1998) offer 10 recommendations for best practice teaching in social studies. The recommendations are:

- Students of social studies need regular opportunities to investigate topics in depth.
• Students need opportunities to exercise choice and responsibility by choosing their own topics for inquiry.

• Social studies teaching should involve exploration of open questions that challenge students’ thinking.

• To make real the concepts being taught, social studies must involve students in active participation in the classroom and wider community.

• Social studies should involve students in both independent inquiry and cooperative learning, to build skills and habits needed for lifelong, responsible learning.

• Social studies should involve students in reading, writing, observing, discussing, and debating to ensure their active participation in learning.

• Social studies learning should be built on students’ prior knowledge of their lives and communities, rather than assuming they know nothing about the subject.

• Social studies should explore a full variety of the cultures found in America, including students’ own backgrounds and understanding of other cultures’ approaches to various social studies concepts.

• Social studies should eschew tracking of students because it deprives various groups of the knowledge essential to their citizenship.

• Social studies evaluation must reflect the importance of students’ thinking, and their preparation to be lifelong responsible citizens, rather than rewarding memorization of decontextualized facts.
These recommendations are based upon national research reports on learning and teaching as well as the authors’ observations of exemplary social studies classrooms (Zemelman et al.). These best practices contributed to the survey instrument for this study. Participants were asked to use a Likert scale, selecting “frequently,” “sometimes,” “occasionally,” or “rarely/never” to rate how often they use these practices. The researcher acknowledges that these best practices do not accommodate the possible constraints that are placed on teachers since the enactment of NCLB and high-stakes standardized testing. These practices are independent of the state testing mandates.

It is important to define what is meant by classroom teaching practices and understand what the literature perceives as best practices in social studies. This understanding may provide insight into understanding the relationship that may occur between teachers’ knowledge and beliefs about social studies and their self-reported classroom practices in social studies.

Teacher Beliefs

Beliefs, attitudes, values, theories, perceptions, ideas, dispositions, and images are all terms used to describe the deeply rooted, highly personal feelings each teacher brings with them into the classroom. However, the term “beliefs,” as used in the study, needs to be defined beyond these general statements. Due to the difficulty of defining the term beliefs and the conflicting opinions about beliefs, the literature on beliefs is varied and there is no agreement on what constitutes acceptable beliefs (Tatto & Coupland, 2003). Nespor (1987) suggests, “we need a theoretically-grounded model of ‘belief systems’ that can serve as a framework for systematic and comparative investigations” (p. 317).
Along with the absence of a framework for beliefs, there does not appear to be a common definition about the term. According to Tato and Coupland (2003) beliefs are, “convictions of truth largely reliant on examination of evidence by individuals or by a social group for their validation” (p. 123). Richardson (2003) presents both a philosophical definition and a psychological definition for beliefs. She asserts that there is a generally agreed upon definition of beliefs, “as psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true” (p. 2). In considering the difference between beliefs and knowledge, knowledge is usually said to require some substantial evidence to support it, while beliefs do not require this form of evidence (Richardson). However, distinguishing between these two is difficult. Pajares (1992) opines that it is difficult to determine where knowledge ends and beliefs begin. He suggests that there is a difference between teachers’ general beliefs and their educational beliefs that must be taken into consideration. Others might argue that these are one and the same.

Nespor (1987) posits that there are four features that are characteristic of beliefs: existential presumption, alternativity, affective and evaluative loading, and episodic structure. These features can help to distinguish beliefs from knowledge. Existential presumptions are the beliefs that each person holds as true; such as a belief that students fail because they are lazy. These beliefs are not usually affected by others and are rarely changed because they are seen as being beyond individual control. Alternativity involves people creating alternative situations based on a perceived ideal rather than the situation that presently exists. For example, a teacher might want to create an ideal classroom structure and may ignore or dismiss problems that interfere with this (Nespor).
In affective and evaluative loading, knowledge of a topic can be separated from feelings about a topic. For example, someone may know how to play the piano, but may dislike playing the piano. Affect and evaluation can impact the energy a teacher may put into teaching a particular topic and determine the value they place on certain subjects, thus impacting how they teach the subject (Nespor, 1987). Lastly, episodic structure involves people drawing upon previous events in their lives and then framing future events based upon these initial occurrences. In teaching, this is often seen as the experiences that one had as a student being reflected in their teaching careers (Nespor). Current practices may sometimes mirror the experiences from the past, or they may be in contrast to them in instances where past experiences were negative.

Nespor’s four characteristics of beliefs were used to analyze the responses from the focus group interviews as a way to categorize teachers’ beliefs and understand the teachers’ motivation behind their beliefs.

The term beliefs was used as the working term for this study. It is also important to clarify the definition of beliefs that was used in this study. This researcher agrees with the definition that beliefs are, “psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true” (Richardson, 2003, p. 2). Furthermore, since beliefs are subjective and difficult to measure, it is necessary to understand that the beliefs that were reported in the study are the expressed beliefs of the participants of the study.

Much of the current literature in the study of teachers’ beliefs pertains to preservice teachers and the effect beliefs have on teaching. These studies usually attempt to change teachers’ beliefs through methods courses and field placement experiences
Also common are studies that address teachers’ beliefs about their students (Johnson & Hall, 2007) and teachers’ pedagogical beliefs (Snider & Roehl, 2007; Wilcox-Herzog, 2002).

Less prevalent are studies that examine inservice teachers’ beliefs and the impact these beliefs have on teachers’ curricular choices, which is an essential element of the study. Muijs and Reynolds (2002) conducted a study with primary school teachers and students in the United Kingdom to determine the relationship between teachers’ behaviors, beliefs, self-efficacy, and subject matter knowledge in relationship to students’ mathematics achievement. Student data were obtained through a pre and post-test and demographic information on the students. Teacher data were obtained through questionnaires and teacher observation. Quantitative methods were used to relate the teacher behaviors to student achievement. The findings suggest that student achievement is related to these factors, with teacher behaviors and self-efficacy showing greater influences over subject matter knowledge (Muijs & Reynolds).

The data that exist within preservice teacher education primarily consist of the ways teachers’ beliefs change after participation in methods courses and/or field experiences. Through an interpretive approach that did not include prior expectations, Doppen (2007) conducted a case study of 19 graduate students involved in a secondary social studies teacher preparation program. The students were enrolled in a three-semester program that consisted of social studies methods courses and a field experience in a classroom. Throughout the program, the preservice teachers were encouraged to, “engage their students in historical inquiry,” and “use primary documents as part of their
regular instruction” (Doppen, p. 56). Through questionnaires, interviews, and daily journals, Doppen discovered that most of the participants did not have strong beliefs about the teaching and learning of social studies at the start of the program. The few participants who indicated they had strong beliefs, suggested that they wanted to make social studies more fun. At the start of the program, the responses regarding the ideas the participants had learned in their methods’ courses usually focused on activities that involved students rather than lecture and textbooks. The overall findings of the study indicated that most participants felt their beliefs were influenced by participating in this teacher preparation program. Many of the student-centered approaches they had learned were incorporated into their field experiences and showed up in their journals. Doppen suggests that additional research is needed to determine how to encourage these student-centered approaches and how to ensure they persist into their teaching once the teacher preparation program is completed.

In an attempt to review the research on preservice teacher beliefs, Tatto and Coupland (2003) selected 26 articles from a search of over 100 peer-reviewed articles from the period 1996-2001. The articles demonstrated efforts to measure change in preservice teachers’ beliefs due to some type of intervention. While most of the articles reported positive results, Tatto and Coupland question the lack of longitudinal studies as well as the lack of evidence presented to support changes in belief other than self-reported data. Furthermore, they comment on the lack of empirical research that looks at actual teaching practice or student learning.

Teacher beliefs encompass a wide area of the educational research literature and consist of a number of different systems for interpretation. A caveat in researching
teacher beliefs involves the self-reporting nature of beliefs (Doppen, 2007). Since beliefs are self-reported, the question arises whether or not the data are precise enough to study and make recommendations to the education field. Muijs and Reynolds (2002) recommend limiting a study of teacher beliefs to one belief system. This study attempted to limit the investigation to fifth-grade teachers’ beliefs about the field of social studies and the teaching of social studies. However, the teachers’ interpretation of their beliefs may encompass additional areas beyond the intentions of the researcher. These may prove valuable to the research and are addressed as warranted.

It is evident that more research is needed in the area of teacher beliefs and their impact on classroom practices. This study attempted to determine the beliefs of fifth-grade teachers about social studies and the teaching of social studies and further attempted to determine if a relationship exists between fifth-grade teachers’ beliefs and their self-reported classroom practices.

**Teacher Knowledge**

Subject matter knowledge, also known as content knowledge, is a controversial topic that has yielded more debate than research (Rice, 2005). The issue of depth versus breadth is one that is often emphasized by proponents of subject matter knowledge (Noddings, 1998; Thornton, 2001). Meanwhile, teacher educators often focus on methods and pedagogical knowledge (Noddings). For this study, subject matter knowledge is used to mean not only the facts a person has about a particular subject, in this case social studies, but the conceptual knowledge inherent to understanding the subject (Shulman, 1986). The term pedagogical knowledge extends beyond the factual subject matter.
understanding and encompasses subject matter knowledge for teaching (Shulman). In other words, the methods of how to teach and transfer information to others.

Most researchers agree that subject matter knowledge is lacking in many prospective teachers (Fritzer & Kumar, 2002; Noddings, 1998; Rice, 2005; Thornton, 2001). In a study by Fritzer and Kumar, preservice elementary education majors were shown to lack basic knowledge of historical events. The researchers administered a 20-item basic history test to 256 students enrolled in an elementary social studies methods course. In addition to demographic questions having to do with age and whether the participants had earned a Bachelor’s degree, the test measured the students’ knowledge of general eras of historical events through low-level multiple-choice questions. The results showed that the overall percent of correct responses was only 54% (Fritzer & Kumar).

An analysis of the findings determined that those students holding a Bachelor’s degree and age 25 and older scored higher in all questions except one, than those younger than 25 and without a Bachelor’s degree. Fritzer and Kumar acknowledge that the test may be biased to older, more educated students; therefore, this should be taken into account before applying the test across general populations. They suggest that as teachers spend time in the classroom, they may acquire the knowledge they need to know. However, due to the fact that social studies is often neglected, teachers may not have the opportunities to spend the time needed teaching the subject and thus gaining the knowledge. In an attempt to address the lack of content knowledge by elementary teachers, Fritzer and Kumar suggest that repetitive pedagogical courses in preservice teacher education be replaced with content courses and content-oriented professional development courses be offered to inservice teachers.
In an 8-year study by Rice (2005), 500 preservice and inservice teachers were given science content related questions as part of an undergraduate elementary science methods course. One of Rice’s objectives was to determine the science subject matter knowledge of preservice and inservice elementary teachers. While the results of this survey highlight a lack of science content knowledge by many preservice and inservice teachers, even more alarming is that approximately half of the participants expressed concern about their lack of content preparation or about their own fears about teaching science content, despite knowing how to teach it.

It is evident that knowledge in both science and social studies is lacking in our schools and colleges (ISI, 2007; Ravitch, 1987; Rice, 2005). As content knowledge extends beyond simple facts, names and dates, and includes deep conceptual thinking, as well as the ability to identify trends, causality and interdisciplinary relationships, it can be difficult to assess knowledge of both students and teachers. Furthermore, assuming that knowledge has been gained simply through participation in content based courses does not take into consideration the complex nature of knowledge. At this point the question of which is more important, content knowledge or pedagogical knowledge, comes into play. Do teachers really know how to teach a subject without knowing the basic content knowledge of the subject? Can teachers meet the needs of their students by diagnosing prior knowledge and addressing misconceptions while lacking a deep understanding of the fundamental concepts? Can teachers who have strong factual content knowledge transfer their knowledge to students for purposes of instruction?

While most elementary teachers have met national standards, or are certified to teach (Rice, 2005), few feel well qualified to teach science and social studies. These
insecurities can lead to negative attitudes towards science and social studies and can even lead to many elementary teachers avoiding the subjects altogether so that their lack of knowledge does not become exposed (Passe, 2006). Understanding both content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge as necessary components of teacher education may help to address some of these issues.

**Pedagogical Content Knowledge**

In 1986, Lee Shulman introduced the term pedagogical content knowledge, referring to it as going “beyond knowledge of subject matter per se to the dimension of subject matter knowledge for teaching” (p. 9). Many researchers and theorists now emphasize a combination of the two for effective teaching. In their essay about educating history teachers, Bain and Mirel (2006) emphasize the need for teachers to not only know the content, but to be able to use the content to understand students’ conceptions, and construct experiences for students that enhance their initial understandings. Grossman, Schoenfeld, and Lee (2005) focus on the pedagogical content knowledge, or the pedagogical understandings of subject matter that include anticipating and responding to students’ conceptions and misconceptions as well as providing examples and representations that make content accessible and challenging to diverse groups of learners. They suggest that teachers should be able to explore pedagogical content within the subjects they teach.

Because elementary teachers are responsible for multiple subjects, many teachers have a limited acquaintance with their subject matter (Thornton, 2001). This in turn may compromise student learning because teachers may give erroneous information, contribute to students’ misconceptions, or be unable to clear up students’ confusion.
(Rice, 2005). Not only must teachers have a deep understanding of the subjects they teach, they must also be able to transform their knowledge for purposes of instruction (Thornton). Grossman et al. (2005) argue for a need of both depth and breadth of subject matter preparation while focusing on pedagogical content knowledge.

Preservice Teacher Education

While this study’s data collection focus on inservice teachers, it is important to understand current issues in methods courses in preservice teacher education as the findings about teacher knowledge may provide valuable information for not only the inservice courses, but also for the design of teacher preparation courses.

A look at Lortie’s (1975) views on teacher socialization may provide an important context for analysis of both teacher beliefs and teacher knowledge. Lortie argues that teachers receive a significant amount of their education through the numerous hours they spend observing teaching as a student. This apprenticeship of observation begins with the first years of schooling and continues through college, thus shaping teachers’ conceptions of the teaching process. Lortie suggests that the formal training of a teacher preparation program plays little part in changing these traditional teaching perspectives. Lortie acknowledges that students are unable to frame their teachers’ actions in terms of pedagogy; therefore, the apprenticeship of observation only begins the socialization process of teaching.

Slekar (1998) conducted a study that attempted to understand preservice teachers’ apprenticeship of observation and the influence it may have on their instructional choices in teaching history. Slekar questioned the implications that arise when preservice teachers’ past experiences are inconsistent with their current views on teaching and
learning. He suggests that what they learned during these “apprenticeships” may be deeply embedded in their belief systems.

Building the apprenticeship of observation theory even further, Slekar (1998) posits that there are two main views in learning and teaching social studies. First, he suggests that there is an objective epistemology, one of factual knowledge, lecture, and objective tests that has existed with early historians and may be the basis for many preservice teachers’ own experiences in learning. Secondly, he suggests there is an interpretive epistemology that allows for multiple perspectives in interpreting history. Slekar acknowledges that most people probably don’t subscribe to an either/or philosophy, rather most people probably fall on a continuum between the two. However, he questions whether these epistemologies impact the way a teacher teaches history.

To investigate these questions, Slekar (1998) conducted a qualitative case study of two preservice teachers. Through multiple interviews, Slekar questioned the preservice teachers about their apprenticeships of observations and their anticipated methods of teaching history. Slekar found that both participants had an objectivist influence when they discussed their recollections of their own schooling; however, as they began to discuss the ways they would teach, they moved away from this objective epistemology and toward a more interpretive epistemology. There were some differences between the two teachers. One teacher seemed conflicted about how she would teach because she indicated that she lacked some knowledge of history. She suggested that if she had more knowledge, she would be more likely to teach in different ways. She also indicated that she didn’t really think her preservice courses prepared her to actually go and teach; rather she would learn that by experiencing different teachers and styles. The other participant
indicated that he would use a more interpretive approach to teaching history but was concerned that he may have difficulty doing this as a first-year teacher (Slekar).

Slekar (1998) ponders how these preservice teachers both indicate a desire for an interpretive epistemology when their backgrounds indicate an objective epistemology. He questions whether their preservice education, based on constructivist tenets, may have influenced their views of history teaching. He also suggests that the contemporary culture in America, that interprets history in new ways, may be responsible for having revised their ideas about history (Slekar).

Slekar (1998) concludes that while past experiences do influence teaching, they may not influence it in a predictable way. Rather, past experiences that conflict with a preservice teacher’s belief system may result in dissonance, which may allow for periods of new learning. Slekar further suggests that preservice teachers need to have exemplary role models that can assist as they examine their beliefs. This may be crucial to preventing the same stagnant, uninspired teaching that has often occurred in the field of social studies and history.

Understanding the knowledge and beliefs teachers come into preservice education with may help in the design of preservice teacher education. Lortie (1975) suggests that the formal training of teacher education programs plays little part in changing traditional teacher perspectives. However, if university educators examine preservice teachers’ views on subject matter, teaching, and learning (Slekar, 1998), they may be able to capitalize on periods of dissonance that occur that will allow these teachers to adopt new views in these areas. By examining the beliefs and knowledge of inservice teachers, this study may be able to show how past experiences in social studies influence the teaching
practices that occur in the elementary social studies classroom, which may assist in the
design of preservice teacher education courses.

In 1997, Owens conducted a study that compared the social studies perspectives
of two groups of preservice elementary teachers, those who were completing an
elementary social studies methods course, and those who had not yet taken the course.
By administering an Elementary Social Studies Perspective Questionnaire to 562
preservice teachers in seven South Florida universities, Owens concluded that there were
many challenges that teacher educators would encounter in teaching elementary social
studies methods courses. He summarized these into six challenges that he says, through
discussion, can lead to improvement in social studies education at the preservice
elementary level.

The first challenge, negative past experiences with social studies, was indicated
by 41.5% of respondents rating past social studies courses as either very uninteresting or
uninteresting. Owens (1997) warns of the dangers of uninteresting becoming equated
with unimportant. This is an area that is addressed with the next challenge, a lack of
interest in teaching social studies. In view of the fact that 33% of respondents indicated
their interest level in social studies as low and only 16% indicated a high interest, there is
a danger of social studies education being neglected. Social studies education is often
relegated to the back burner in favor of more important or interesting subjects. In spite of
this disheartening trend, Owens stated that 50% of respondents reported their interest
level as medium. If this group of students is targeted, this could help bring social studies
education back to one of primary importance. In looking at the first two issues addressed,
Owens points out that 90% of the respondents were women. As the majority of
elementary teachers are women, it would be beneficial to further determine if there is a
difference between men and women in regard to attitudes toward social studies
education. If so, then consideration should be taken to determine the reasons behind the
poor attitudes of women in reference to social studies so that this trend can be alleviated.

Inherent in the nature of social studies is a deep understanding of what constitutes
social studies. Through several questions relating to the understanding of social studies,
its makeup and definitions, Owens (1997) was disappointed to discover that a majority of
the respondents felt that social studies was one of the social sciences and nearly 50% felt
that social studies was a combination of history and geography. Without a good
understanding of what social studies is, it is difficult to assume that those responsible for
teaching it will be able to do so successfully. In addition to a good understanding of
social studies, Owens’s next challenge addresses the need for teachers to participate in
sociological discussions to ensure they address the diverse needs of their classes. Finally,
challenges five and six specifically relate to the organization of teacher education
courses. Owens suggests that university professors need to select new and challenging
content and utilize interactive field experiences during enrollment in social studies
methods courses to counter some of the challenges in social studies education. While
Owens’s study focuses on preservice teachers, his study is relevant to this study because
it focuses on beliefs about social studies. By studying teacher beliefs in the inservice
educational setting, this study explores how fifth-grade teachers’ beliefs relate to
classroom practices. The challenges presented by Owens may also exist in the inservice
teacher’s classroom. An awareness of this may help in understanding how to address
issues that may inhibit effective social studies teaching.
Based upon studies that show a lack of subject matter knowledge by prospective teachers (Adams, 1998; Fritzer & Kumar, 2002; Quinn, 1997; Rice, 2005), it is evident that a focus on subject matter knowledge is needed in teacher education programs today. As Lee Shulman (1986) discovered, content and pedagogy have historically been, “part of one indistinguishable body of understanding” (p. 6). It is only over time that the paradigm has shifted. In the 19th Century, content appeared to be the driving force behind teacher education, while in the 20th Century, pedagogy moved to the forefront in terms of teacher education (Shulman). It is imperative that a concerted effort to balance both subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge become the focus of teacher education programs. This can only be achieved by an acceptance on all fronts that subject matter cannot subsist without pedagogical understanding and pedagogical understanding cannot subsist without subject matter knowledge.

Teacher educators must define the terms in which teacher education programs can meet both of these needs. It is necessary for supporters of methodology to work with proponents of subject matter knowledge to devise opportunities for prospective teachers to develop their own conceptual knowledge of subject matter while also developing strategies to effectively transfer this information.

*Inservice Teachers*

While the debate between subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge appears to center around preservice education, research is needed that comes from the classroom (Cuban, 1991). Few studies were found that focus on the subject matter knowledge or pedagogical knowledge of classroom teachers at the elementary level; however, several studies look at secondary history teachers in an attempt to classify the
teachers based upon what they do in the classroom and the decisions they make about the content in the classroom (Evans, 1989; Wilson & Wineburg, 1988; Wineburg & Wilson, 1991).

Before looking at these studies, it is necessary to identify a connection that may exist between teacher knowledge and teacher beliefs. Evans (1989) indicated in his research that teachers’ conceptions of history help shape the curriculum as their conceptions are based upon their backgrounds, beliefs, and knowledge. Similarly, Wilson and Wineburg (1988) note the implications their research has on the field of teacher knowledge. They comment that, “For our teachers, ‘knowledge’ of the subject matter was as much a product of their beliefs as it was an accumulation of facts and interpretations” (Wilson & Wineburg, p. 537). While this may seem to be an obvious statement, it is important to realize that knowledge can be just as subjective as beliefs. Knowledge is dependent upon the experiences and beliefs that people have. Furthermore, knowledge can be interpreted differently, leading to multiple perspectives on the same topic. These multiple perspectives can result in different degrees of knowledge for different people.

In a mixed method study, Evans (1989) attempts to clarify secondary school teachers’ conceptions of history through surveys and interviews. Stemming from an earlier exploratory study on teacher and student conceptions of history, Evans utilized a survey questionnaire that generated data about teachers’ backgrounds. These data were then used to determine if patterns existed that linked teacher backgrounds to their conceptions of history. Interviews were used to probe teachers on such things as their thoughts about history, its purpose, meaning, and relevance, as well as descriptions of their teaching style and their own perceptions about their conceptions of history. Evans
concludes that while teachers’ conceptions of history vary, they tend to fall into a broad category that combines pedagogy and epistemology. The five typologies Evans identifies are: storyteller, scientific historian, relativist/reformer, cosmic philosopher, and eclectic.

Evans acknowledges that teachers may fall into more than one of the categories, although most display a “dominant tendency” (p. 215). Table 1 shows an overview of Evans’s five typologies of teachers’ conceptions of history.

Table 1

*Evans’s Typologies Based on Teachers’ Conceptions of History*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typology</th>
<th>Emphasis on</th>
<th>Teaching style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Storyteller</strong></td>
<td>• Fascinating details about people and events</td>
<td>• Teacher-centered classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Knowledge of other times, people, and places</td>
<td>• Teacher-talk dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scientific Historian</strong></td>
<td>• Historical explanation and interpretation</td>
<td>• Teacher as guide rather than arbitrator of truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Understanding historical processes</td>
<td>• Open-ended questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gaining background knowledge for understanding current issues</td>
<td>• Inquiry oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mix of uniqueness and similarities among people and events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relativist/Reformer</strong></td>
<td>• Relation of the past to present problems</td>
<td>• Pose problems for students from present day issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• History as the background for understanding current issues</td>
<td>• Use a variety of methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Inquiry oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cosmic Philosopher</strong></td>
<td>• Generalizations or “laws” connect events</td>
<td>• Process centered approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Definite patterns in history</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cyclical view of history</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• History has a profound meaning with implications for the future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eclectic</strong></td>
<td>• Combine elements of two or more of the typologies</td>
<td>• Emphasis on variety and student interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No dominant tendency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evan’s (1989)
As it can be difficult to separate knowledge and beliefs, Evans’s typologies were used, along with Nespor’s four characteristics of beliefs, as a way to categorize the instructional practices that the fifth-grade teachers indicated they use when teaching social studies.

Brophy and VanSledright (1997) suggest that while Evans defines the typologies for secondary school teachers, the typologies also have relevance for defining elementary history teachers. They offer several caveats, though. First, they note that the typologies depend upon each other for their distinctions because the typologies tend to do the same thing but in different ways. Secondly, they offer a distinction between relativists and reformers that Evans does not. Brophy and VanSledright posit that relativists and reformers might differ in that relativists usually attempt to understand the past on their own terms while not passing judgment on choices made in the past. Reformers, on the other hand, use an approach that allows them to judge historical events through a right versus wrong lens.

Wilson and Wineburg (1988) interviewed and observed several high school novice social studies teachers in order to determine how well they were prepared to teach a variety of courses under the social studies umbrella. They reported on four teachers to illustrate the influence that disciplinary backgrounds had on instructional decision-making. Wilson and Wineburg determined that the four novice teachers, in learning to teach, had to develop an educational philosophy, which involved, “learning new things about subject matter as well as about pedagogy” (p. 534). Interestingly, they do not suggest that social studies teachers should be prepared or know all there is to know about the subject, especially social studies, as it is a broad topic. However, they suggest that the
teachers’ preservice training “shaped what they did and did not know” (Wilson & Wineburg, p. 535). This area of the study might be beneficial to the research on change in teacher education. The argument for knowledge, both subject matter and pedagogical, presents itself in the observations of these teachers in terms of their lack of knowledge limiting their ability to apply alternative interpretations of subject matter that is new to them and in the inability to make accurate generalizations and connections across the subjects. Further connecting the ideas of beliefs and knowledge, Wilson and Wineburg suggest that learning consists of more than obtaining new knowledge; it also must consider an examination of previously held beliefs. While Wilson and Wineburg make a case for teacher education that emphasizes, “an awareness of different ways of knowing” (p. 538) as a way to assist with changing beliefs and providing more effective social studies teaching, what are the implications of this for elementary teaching? Is there a certain amount of subject matter knowledge that must be present in order for someone to be able to generate an awareness of knowing?

In a subsequent study, Wineburg and Wilson (1991) contrasted the teaching style of two experienced high school history teachers. They classified one of the teachers as an invisible teacher and the other as a visible teacher based upon their classroom practices. The invisible teacher appeared to have little hands-on interaction with her students; rather, the students were responsible for interpreting and understanding the issues and ultimately for the success of the activity. According to Evans’s (1989) typologies, this teacher would probably be classified as a scientific historian. On the other hand, the visible teacher appears to have a more teacher-dominated classroom consisting of whole group activities dependent upon the teachers’ questions and explanations (Wineburg &
Wilson). The researchers note that the “visible” teacher’s class is full of electricity with a, “master performer who has …led [his students] on an expedition into the past” (Wineburg & Wilson, p. 404). The visible teacher could be classified as a storyteller under Evans’s typologies. Bain and Mirel (2006) concur that history offers engaging stories that can help create historical understanding as long as the teacher understands the way the historical problems are selected, organized, analyzed, and constructed. The conclusion Wineburg and Wilson make is that in spite of very different teaching styles, both teachers have created classrooms that are full of energy and dominated by historical inquiry. Subject matter knowledge is essential for these two teachers as it allows them to represent the deep conceptual and theoretical debates of the subject. Additionally, each teacher has a general knowledge base that allows them to further create meaning across other disciplines, which seems to emphasize Wilson and Wineburg’s (1988) earlier case for an awareness of knowing (Wineburg & Wilson).

In these times of high-stakes testing and accountability, it is evident that new approaches need to be discussed to ensure that teacher educators are truly highly qualified and that students are receiving the education they deserve. According to George Bernard Shaw (1903), “He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches.” Teachers and students deserve a more favorable statement than George Bernard Shaw offers. In the words of Lee Shulman (1986), “Those who can, do. Those who understand, teach.” (p. 14).

Chapter Summary

As much as NCLB and standardized testing appear to contribute to the neglect of social studies in the elementary school, problems in the social studies field have existed
throughout schooling that are independent of the current testing trends. Often seen as a boring subject (Chapin, 2006; Owens, 1996; Zhao & Hoge, 2005) and of little value to students (Chapin; McGowan et al., 1990), social studies has long suffered behind the subjects of reading and mathematics. Further compromised by lack of subject matter knowledge by teachers (Fritzer & Kumar, 2002), unclear definitions (Owens, 1997), and a lack of interest by teachers (Passe, 2006), social studies in the elementary school is in need of attention. Research in the social studies includes few qualitative studies that analyze and report on the teaching that occurs in elementary social studies classrooms (Cuban, 1991). This study attempted to fill this need through a study that uses quantitative survey instruments followed by a qualitative data collection method, a focus group, to further extend the quantitative data. This study utilized an initial beliefs and classroom practices survey followed by a knowledge survey and focus group interview to determine the beliefs, knowledge, and self-reported classroom practices fifth-grade teachers have about social studies and social studies teaching. This study attempted to determine the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and knowledge of social studies and their self-reported classroom practices. Furthermore, this study attempted to determine the relationship between these factors and teaching experience and the relationship of these factors and other demographic factors such as age, gender, and education level.
Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter summarizes the methodology of the study including the sampling plan, data collection, and data analysis. In order to answer the research questions, a quantitative design was used to obtain a comprehensive picture of fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, and self-reported classroom practices relating to social studies. A basic qualitative instrument, a focus group, was used to provide an in-depth look that expands on fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, and self-reported classroom practices relating to social studies. The study is a two-phased design for data collection. The first phase was designed to obtain statistical, quantitative data to address the research questions using a survey that addresses fifth-grade teachers’ beliefs and their self-reported classroom practices. The second phase was designed to obtain statistical, quantitative data to address the research questions using a knowledge survey. Qualitative data using focus groups were further utilized to look at fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, and self-reported classroom practices relating to social studies.

This design was used for the following reasons. First, the quantitative data were used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of fifth-grade teachers’ beliefs, knowledge, and self-reported classroom practices in social studies in one school district in the state of Florida.
Secondly, the qualitative instrument was used to illustrate and elaborate on the findings from the quantitative data and provide an in-depth look at fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, and self-reported classroom practices relating to social studies.

The purpose of the study is to learn about fifth-grade teachers’ beliefs, knowledge, and self-reported classroom practices pertaining to social studies. Specifically this study addresses the following questions.

1. What is the relationship between fifth-grade teachers’ beliefs about social studies and their self-reported classroom practices?
2. What is the relationship between fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge of social studies and their self-reported classroom practices?
3. Does teaching experience moderate the relationship between social studies beliefs and self-reported classroom practices?
4. Does teaching experience moderate the relationship between social studies’ knowledge and self-reported classroom practices?
5. Do demographic attributes moderate the relationship between social studies beliefs and self-reported classroom practices?
6. Do demographic attributes moderate the relationship between social studies’ knowledge and self-reported classroom practices?

**Sampling**

**Site**

The study took place in a large school district in Florida. The district serves more than 258,000 students at 283 school sites across the county and employs more than 21,000 instructional staff members. The district’s population is diverse with
approximately 38% black students, 30% white students, 26% Hispanic students, and approximately 6% of students from other ethnicities. Of this population, 37% of students in the district receive free and reduced price lunch.

Participants

The participants for the study were delimited to fifth-grade teachers because they have been trained as subject generalists and are expected to teach social studies within their curriculum. Approximately 1,000 fifth-grade teachers were expected to take part in the first phase of the study, the beliefs and classroom practices survey, and approximately 28 teachers were expected to take part in the second phase of the study, the knowledge survey and the focus group interviews. The participants were determined as follows. There are 137 elementary schools in this district. However, only 136 schools fit the criteria of having fifth-grade teachers, as one school is a primary learning center. Additionally, the researcher’s school was eliminated from the study. From these 135 schools, the participants were categorized into two different stages for the study. In the first stage, three schools, one each from an A-rated, B-rated, and C-rated category, based on Florida’s system for school accountability, were selected as case study schools that would proceed through the study as a group. The grading system was used as a way to categorize the schools into smaller groups for the random sample. This was expected to yield a group of approximately 21 teachers, as most grade level teams in the county averaged 7 teachers. However, this yielded a final group of seven teachers from the case study schools. An initial list of possible schools for this stage of the study was gathered from the school district website. Once permission was granted from the school district, principals from three of these schools were contacted and asked if their fifth-grade
teachers would be willing to serve as one of the case study schools for the study (see Appendix A). The fifth-grade team leader was contacted to make arrangements for the study. The teachers were also sent a letter informing them of their role in the study (see Appendix B). If principals declined, additional schools were contacted until a total of three schools, one from each grade category, were secured.

In the second stage of the study, the fifth-grade teachers from the other 132 schools, 822 teachers, were emailed a letter and a website link to the beliefs and classroom practices survey (see Appendices C and D). The survey contained a final question that asked if they would be willing to participate in the final phase of the study that consisted of a knowledge survey and a focus group interview. A random sample of up to seven of these teachers was selected for a fourth focus group. This focus group was in addition to the three focus groups from the case study schools. These teachers were selected from those who responded on the beliefs and classroom practices survey indicating their interest in this phase of the study. The researcher contacted the teachers and a time and place was scheduled for the fourth focus group. It was expected that a total of approximately 1,000 fifth-grade teachers would be invited to take part in the first phase of the study, the beliefs and classroom practices survey, and approximately 28 teachers (random sample of seven teachers from the 132 schools and the 21 teachers from the case study schools) would take part in the second phase of the study: the knowledge survey and the focus group interviews. In the final study, 822 teachers were invited to take part in the beliefs and classroom practices survey and 14 teachers took part in the knowledge survey and focus group interview.
Data Collection

Instrumentation

Teacher Beliefs and Classroom Practices Survey.

Once permission was granted from the local school district to perform the research study, identified fifth-grade teachers were contacted by email and asked to participate in the survey. The fifth-grade teachers from the three case study schools were contacted to make arrangements for the completion of both surveys and the scheduling of the focus group interviews.

The survey was constructed by the researcher and included basic demographic questions as well as Likert-type items (see Appendix E). The beliefs’ section of the survey consisted of three parts. Part I focused on personal information about the participant. Part II focused on information about the participant’s profession. Part III focused on 21 belief statements about social studies and about social studies teaching and learning in the elementary grades using a scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. This section was partially adapted from Owens’s (1996) Elementary Social Studies Perspective Questionnaire. Eight of the 21 questions that pertain to beliefs were adapted from Owens’s questionnaire. Other items were developed by the researcher.

The classroom practices section of the survey consisted of one part that was divided into four sections. Each section used the scale of frequently (at least 1 time per week), sometimes (3-4 times per month), occasionally (1-2 times per month), and rarely/never (0-1 times per year) to help teachers identify the frequency with which they use particular resources, practices, and assessments. The first section focused on the classroom resources teachers use to teach social studies. The second section focused on
the self-reported classroom practices that teachers use while teaching social studies. The 27 items in this section incorporated best practices in teaching social studies as recommended by Zemelman et al. (1998). The third section focused on assessment of students. The last section asked teachers to use the same scale, frequently (at least 1 time per week), sometimes (3-4 times per month), occasionally (1-2 times per month), and rarely/never (0-1 times per year), to understand the frequency with which certain factors influence instructional decisions made by the teacher.

The survey was tested for reliability and validity. Reliability was tested for the following summated sections of the survey: beliefs (a = .799), resources (a= .807), assessment (a= .639), and best practices (a= .800). Validity was also tested and is discussed along with the pilot test.

The beliefs and classroom practices survey information was confidential and was coded to the knowledge survey and focus group so that it could be used for comparison. The survey was constructed using an Internet based survey website, hosted by the researcher’s school, which allowed for ease of use for the participant. The survey was constructed so that participants could suspend and continue the survey as needed. These accommodations for the participants were expected to contribute to a greater response rate.

After the first email, additional email reminders with the link to the survey were sent to the teachers. This was also expected to raise the rate of return for this survey. The survey methodology was selected because it allowed for a comprehensive summary of the beliefs and self-reported classroom practices of a large number of fifth-grade teachers. An advantage to the survey instrument is that it allows a large amount of data to
be collected in a short amount of time. A limitation to the survey instrument is that the participants were not able to elaborate on their answers, nor were they able to explain the reasoning for their responses. Furthermore, some participants did not complete the survey, which could affect the representative nature of the survey (Thomas, 2003).

*Knowledge Survey.*

A knowledge survey (see Appendix F) was utilized to understand the knowledge fifth-grade teachers have about social studies. The teachers in this phase of the study were given the knowledge survey prior to the focus group interview. This survey consisted of two parts. Part I focused on educational information about the participants. Part II consisted of a 60-item knowledge test. Adapted from the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI, 2007), this test contained 60 multiple-choice items in four areas of civics literacy: American History, Political Philosophy and American Government, America and the World, and The Market Economy. While permission was granted by ISI to administer this test, this does not indicate endorsement of the study by ISI. Additionally, because the questions are publicly accessible via the Internet, and because the study is testing a different category of subjects, the findings are not measurable against ISI’s findings. While the questions are publicly accessible, participants were not aware of the questions that were asked of them prior to attending the focus group session where they also took the knowledge survey. The researcher acknowledges that there was a slight chance that the participants might have taken this test via the Internet; however, it is unlikely that influenced their knowledge during the administration of this test. The researcher further acknowledges the weaknesses inherent in a knowledge survey. Participants might not have been receptive to completing a knowledge test. Furthermore,
the test was based upon factual knowledge; therefore, it might not accurately measure the many dimensions of knowledge a teacher may have. Additionally, the knowledge test did not address all of the components of curriculum as stated in the Florida Sunshine State Standards for fifth-grade, because it did not have a geography component. However, the knowledge test was being used as a way to measure one aspect of knowledge. Many studies focus on teacher knowledge (Fritzer & Kumar, 2002; Rice, 2005; Wineburg & Wilson, 1991); however, more research is needed that evaluates teacher knowledge in order to effectively understand teacher learning and, in turn, address this component in preservice education and in professional development for inservice teachers.

*Focus Group.*

A basic qualitative study design was used to further investigate the knowledge fifth-grade teachers have about social studies and their relationship to their self-reported classroom practices, as well as the beliefs fifth-grade teachers have about social studies and their relationship to their self-reported classroom practices.

Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989) identify five common reasons for combining quantitative and qualitative research. First, it may provide triangulation that seeks to corroborate data between the two. It may also be complementary, seeking clarification or elaboration of the results. Third, it may seek to help develop or inform methods from one to the other. Fourth, it may seek to discover paradoxes or contradictions between the questions or results from one with the other, and lastly it may seek to expand on the scope of one method by using multiple methods. The use of focus groups provided a qualitative instrument that allowed for triangulation of the data and
could also clarify responses from the initial survey and expand upon the data generated from the quantitative findings.

Upon completion of the first phase of data collection, the beliefs and classroom practices survey, the second stage of the study that consisted of a knowledge survey and focus group interview took place. Teachers from the three case study schools participated in one and a half to two-hour sessions that included a knowledge survey and a focus group interview that probed further into their beliefs, knowledge, and self-reported classroom practices in regard to social studies. The knowledge survey took between 25 minutes and one hour to complete. In addition, a random sample of up to seven teachers from the initial survey (132 schools) who indicated they were interested in participating in the second phase of the study also took part in the knowledge survey and focus group interview. A limitation of the fourth focus group is that these teachers may have a greater interest or knowledge of social studies, thus prompting them to volunteer to participate in this second phase of the study.

The focus group lasted between 20 – 60 minutes, depending upon the group, and was audio-taped and transcribed. The interview protocol (see Appendix G) for the focus group was developed based upon questions that were intended to elicit responses from the teachers about their knowledge, beliefs, and self-reported classroom practices in social studies.

The total time required for the second phase of the study took approximately two hours. Teachers who participated in the knowledge survey and focus group were provided lunch and a book for their classroom library.
The use of focus groups addresses a need for qualitative data at the elementary level in social studies. Most data that come from this field focus on the amount of time teachers spend, or don’t spend, teaching social studies (Burstein et al., 2006; Hinde, 2005; Passe, 2006). As it is well known that there is a neglect of social studies teaching in the elementary school, this study attempted to fill a gap in the literature by focusing on the self-reported classroom practices that are occurring in the classroom, how teachers feel about social studies, and the knowledge they have about social studies.

**Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted with 10 fifth-grade teachers to determine the reliability and validity of the beliefs and classroom practices survey instrument. The participants were asked to indicate the amount of time they spent completing the surveys. In addition, five participants were interviewed to determine if they had any difficulty completing the surveys. Coefficient alphas were also generated for each subscale to measure the internal consistency reliability of the beliefs and classroom practices survey.

While the knowledge survey instrument had already been tested for reliability and validity, a pilot test was conducted with one fifth-grade teacher to determine the coherence of the educational information questions from this survey and the participant was timed to determine the amount of time necessary to complete this survey instrument. The survey was estimated to take approximately 20-30 minutes. A pilot study of the interview questions for the focus group sessions was also conducted.
Data Analysis

The data analysis for the study occurred after each phase of the study. Upon return of the beliefs and classroom practices survey, an analysis of personal and professional information and the Likert-type items took place. Correlations were computed using subscales from the beliefs and classroom practices survey. The following table illustrates the variables that were summated from this survey. Instructional decisions (questions 64-69) were reported individually and correlated with personal beliefs about social studies and beliefs about social studies teaching.

Table 2
Beliefs and Classroom Practices Survey Summated Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Section</th>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Question Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>• Personal beliefs about social studies and social studies teaching</td>
<td>Questions 9-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Practices</td>
<td>• Resources</td>
<td>Questions 30-38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Best Practices (Zemelman, Daniels, &amp; Hyde, 1998)</td>
<td>Questions 39-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assessment</td>
<td>Questions 57-63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Decisions</td>
<td>• Time</td>
<td>Question 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sunshine State Standards</td>
<td>Question 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Textbook</td>
<td>Question 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Professional Development</td>
<td>Question 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Administrative Mandates</td>
<td>Question 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Personal Interest</td>
<td>Question 69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An analysis was used to determine the Pearson correlation coefficients regarding the expressed beliefs of the participants and their self-reported classroom practices. Regression analyses were used to determine if teaching experience and demographic attributes moderate the relationships between beliefs and self-reported classroom practices.
The knowledge survey followed a similar analysis to the beliefs and classroom practices survey. The knowledge items were analyzed as a composite score of the 60 items and then as a score for each area: American History, America and the World, Political Philosophy and American Government, and The Market Economy. An analysis was used to determine if there was a correlation between the knowledge of the participants and their self-reported classroom practices. Regression analyses were used to determine if teaching experience and demographic attributes (education level, gender, and age) moderate the relationships between knowledge and self-reported classroom practices.

According to Krueger and Casey (2000), “Focus group analysis is systematic, sequential, verifiable, and continuous” (p. 128). A systematic and sequential analysis allows for results that reflect the information that was shared by the group. Furthermore, the analysis should include “a trail of evidence” (Krueger & Casey, p. 128) that allows for clarification and accurate representation of the data. This was accomplished by audio-taping and careful transcribing by the researcher. Qualitative data analysis was a continuous process that began with the first focus group and continued throughout all of the focus groups. Each focus group was analyzed and compared to the earlier groups. To ensure continuous analysis, the researcher scheduled time in between focus group sessions to allow for transcription and a short summary of the responses (Krueger & Casey).

The qualitative data were coded by hand and analyzed by the researcher. The researcher used the constant comparative method (Creswell, 2007) to generate patterns and themes. Qualitative data from question number eight on the beliefs and classroom
practices survey, where participants were asked to explain if they indicated that they teach social studies for an amount of time other than daily, 3-4 times per week, or 1-2 times per week were coded separately from the transcripts of the focus group sessions. For this question, a list of categories was generated and four central categories emerged pertaining to the effects on social studies teaching, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), departmentalization, social studies integrated with reading, and social studies alternated with other subjects (Appendix H).

Qualitative data for each focus group interview were also analyzed using the constant comparative method. A list of categories was generated after each focus group. The researcher started with open coding and generated a list of categories from the interview data. After each additional focus group, open coding was continued and new categories were added to the coding list. At the conclusion of all of the focus group interviews, axial coding was done where the following specific categories were determined: social studies experience, social studies teaching, challenges, and decisions (Appendix I).

The qualitative data were also analyzed according to the three general areas of the study, beliefs, knowledge, and classroom practices (see Appendix J), as well as specific components of the theoretical framework including Nespor’s four characteristics of beliefs, Evans’s five typologies of teachers’ conceptions of history, and Shulman’s Model of Pedagogical Reasoning and Action (Appendix K).

As the qualitative data are intended to expand upon the quantitative data, the data collected from the focus group were expected to increase the meaningfulness of the
quantitative data and allow a more in-depth look at fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, and self-reported classroom practices relating to social studies.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a description of the methodology that was used in the study. The sampling plan, including the site and participants, was addressed and the bounds of the case were set. Next, the data collection methods were discussed. Quantitative data were collected using a beliefs and classroom practices instrument and a knowledge instrument. Qualitative data were collected through focus group interviews. Data were analyzed using a constant comparative method that looked for patterns and emerging themes, and were also analyzed in reference to the components of the theoretical framework for the study.
Chapter 4

Introduction to Chapter

This study attempted to learn about fifth-grade teachers’ beliefs, knowledge, and self-reported classroom practices pertaining to social studies and the relationships that may exist between them. Chapter Four first examines the demographic and contextual information describing the fifth-grade teachers in the study. The second part of the chapter examines each research question using the quantitative data. The qualitative data gathered is used to inform research questions one and two as a means to provide an in-depth look at fifth-grade teachers’ views on social studies beliefs, knowledge, and their self-reported classroom practices.

Demographic and Contextual Data

In order to gain an understanding of fifth-grade teachers’ beliefs, knowledge, and self-reported classroom practices pertaining to social studies it is important to examine the teaching experience and demographics of the fifth-grade teachers who participated in this study.

Eight hundred twenty-two fifth-grade teachers were sent the initial beliefs and classroom practices survey. Two hundred one responded to the survey, yielding a 24% return rate. In addition, 14 of the 201 teachers participated in the second phase of the study, a knowledge survey and a focus group interview. Sixty participants answered yes to a question on the beliefs and classroom practices survey asking if they wanted to
participate in the second phase of the study, a knowledge survey and focus group interview. From this group of 60 teachers, seven were randomly selected to participate in phase two. To generate the other teachers who would participate in phase two, a random sample of the schools in the county was conducted. The schools were first categorized according to their school letter grade as indicated by the state of Florida. The schools were categorized as A, B, or C-rated schools. There were a total of 89 A-rated schools, 19 B-rated schools, and 22 C-rated schools. Five schools were rated as D or F schools and were not included in this breakdown. From these lists, random samples were conducted in order to generate one case study school from each rating category for a total of three case study schools. Case study schools were identified for this study in order to ensure that there would be participation, as it was not expected that there would be a high rate of respondents indicating willingness to participate in the second phase of the study. In actuality, the case study schools proved harder to obtain participation from than the volunteers from the beliefs and classroom practices survey. From the case study schools, the researcher ultimately interviewed one teacher from an A-rated school, one teacher from a B-rated school, and five teachers from a C-rated school.

Of the 201 teacher participants, 168 teachers (84.4%) were female and 31 teachers (15.6%) were male. Thirty-nine teachers (19.4%) were age 21-30, 52 teachers (25.9%) were age 31-40, 56 teachers (27.9%) were age 41-50, 44 teachers (21.9%) were age 51-60, and 10 teachers (5.0%) indicated they were over 60 years of age. The majority of respondents, 136 (67.7%) were Caucasian, 20 (10.0%) were Hispanic, 34 (16.9%) were African-American, 1 (.5%) was Asian, and 10 teachers (5.0%) indicated they were of other ethnicity.
Regarding educational level, 96 teachers (48.0%) held a Bachelor’s degree, while 97 teachers (48.5%) held a Master’s degree. One teacher (.5%) indicated they had a Specialist degree and 6 teachers (3.0%) indicated they had Doctoral degrees. In looking at the fifth-grade teachers’ teaching experience, seven teachers (3.5%) indicated it was their first year teaching, 49 teachers (24.4%) had been teaching between 2-5 years, 45 teachers (22.4%) indicated they had between 6-10 years teaching experience, 34 teachers (16.9%) indicated they had between 11-15 years teaching experience, 24 teachers (11.9%) had 16-20 years teaching experience, and 42 teachers (20.9%) indicated they had over 20 years teaching experience. Table 3 summarizes the number of participants (N), the means, and the standard deviations of these variables.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>0.660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary K-5 Teaching Experience</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>1.550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Spent Teaching Social Studies</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.063</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 14 participants in the second phase of the study also completed educational information pertaining to the number of courses they had completed pertaining to social studies in high school and college and the type of teacher education program they completed. Regarding high school courses, most teachers indicated they had two courses in history (35.7%), one course in geography (42.9%), one course in government (50.0%), and zero courses in economics (42.9%). Three participants did not attend high school in the United States and indicated that the way they counted their courses was different, as
the content was more integrated. Therefore, they had difficulty counting courses as such. One participant who grew up in Haiti indicated that he had 10 courses in both history and geography. Regarding college courses, the majority of participants indicated that they had one course in history (35.7%), zero courses in geography (71.4%), one course in government (35.7%), and zero courses in economics (57.1%).

When asked about the type of teacher education program they completed, six teachers (46.2%) indicated that they completed a traditional undergraduate elementary education program. Four teachers (30.8%) indicated they completed a Master’s plus elementary education program, two teachers (15.4%) did not complete an education program, and one teacher (7.7%) indicated he or she completed elementary education certification only.

The following section addresses particular areas from the surveys concerning fifth-grade teachers’ beliefs, knowledge, and self-reported classroom practices pertaining to social studies.

*Is Social Studies Being Taught?*

Of the participating fifth-grade teachers, 184 teachers (92%) indicated that social studies was a part of their curriculum, while 16 teachers (8.0%) indicated that it was not a part of their curriculum. In responding to how often they teach social studies, 40 teachers (20.1%) indicated they teach social studies daily, 63 teachers (31.7%) indicated they teach social studies 1-2 times per week, 49 teachers (24.6%) indicated they teach social studies 3-4 times per week, and 47 teachers (23.6%) marked other for the amount of time they spend teaching social studies. After indicating how often they teach social studies, teachers who marked “other” were asked to explain. Forty-seven teachers marked
“other”; however, 61 teachers provided an explanation about their teaching of social studies. The responses were coded into four emergent categories: Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), departmentalization, social studies integrated with reading, and social studies alternated with other subjects (see Appendix H).

A large number of responses centered on the FCAT and how it determines what must be taught. “. . . in the beginning of the year, 5th grade teachers are primarily focused on Reading, Math, and Science.” Some even indicated that they are told not to teach social studies. “Now it is better because FCAT is over but before FCAT we were told to only teach Science.” One person wrote, “Social studies is not tested on the FCAT so it is not always taught on a regular basis.”

Another area that was frequently mentioned was the use of departmentalization. Since many schools are using a departmentalization model, social studies is not always included independently as one of the subjects. “My school is departmentalizing in 5th grade. I teach science for 90 minutes. The Reading teacher uses Social Studies curriculum, but not on a daily basis." Other teachers indicated that they teach a subject other than social studies. “This year we are departmentalized and I only teach Science curriculum,” and “We are departmentalized, I teach science and reading.”

Several teachers commented that they integrate social studies within their reading curriculum. “Social studies activities are incorporated into the reading curriculum as projects.” Also, “I teach it through reading extension activities (mini projects).”

Lastly, teachers indicated that social studies is sometimes alternated with other subjects. “I do units, so sometimes it’s every day for five weeks, and then nothing for five weeks.”
“I alternate Science and Social Studies and teach one full unit of one and then teach one full unit of the other.” One teacher indicated when she teaches social studies in a nine-week period. “We spend 2 weeks out of the 9 teaching social studies.”

Several responses reiterated that teachers do teach social studies. Some of these responses were, “Each day I include 45 minutes of curriculum in social studies,” and “We read and discuss one lesson a day.”

In looking at the focus group and individual interviews, participants also indicated the FCAT was a reason they did not teach social studies. In one individual interview, the participant responded to a question that asked her how she decides what to teach and what not to teach in social studies. She responded that it is mostly based on time.

To be honest with you, I only teach social studies pretty much, like teach social studies as a subject, pretty much after the FCAT because before the FCAT basically . . . what I teach is what’s going to be tested.

During one of the focus group interviews, one respondent stated, “We were also, I don’t want to say forbidden, but we were also encouraged to not teach social studies until the FCATs are over.”

Six of the participants in the focus group interviews indicated they teach using a departmentalization model. However, during the interviews, these participants rarely mentioned departmentalization and the effect it had on their social studies teaching. The only time departmentalization was mentioned was when asked about the resources they use to teach social studies, JoAnne* stated,

*Pseudonyms were used
I teach science so I don’t really get in-depth with it but . . . I have a couple of books that . . . have nonfiction facts in there that they incorporate with that. It goes along with what they are doing in social studies.

Several teachers in the focus group interviews also indicated that they alternate the subject of social studies with science or that they alternate it within their reading curriculum. Janet indicated that she teaches social studies through her reading unit. “I take three weeks out of the nine-week term to do a social studies unit. . . . We use their social studies textbook like their reading book just the same way you do a reading series.”

In the focus group interview with Heidi from Grant Elementary, she commented that their focus is on reading, mathematics, and science prior to the FCAT. “The administration would say, you know, if we’re going to do social studies, use it to teach the reading skills.”

The participants in the focus group of self-selected teachers indicated reading as a way for more teachers to include social studies in their curriculum. Robin commented, It’s not a separate, you know, subject I have to teach. If they look at, you know, I can teach reading through social studies and they’re learning content and vocabulary and whatnot and just incorporate it into what they do, it’s not such a big deal.

Rob also discussed his thoughts about teaching social studies through reading. “I think you can teach social studies through reading as well. The Trophies series has a lot of social studies and . . . famous people from the past, and if you just do that, you’re teaching social studies.”
Further data pertaining to whether social studies is being taught emerged when interview participants were asked about the challenges they encounter when teaching social studies. Most interview participants emphatically stated time was a challenge in teaching social studies. In the focus group interview with the self-selected teachers, Lisa commented:

I love social studies but . . . I kind of feel like there’s so much pressure to teach the reading series and I’m required to do three reading groups with my classroom but it leaves very little time for me to teach it and honestly it’s my favorite thing to teach. . . . I wish I could have another two hours on my day for that reason.

Later in the interview session, several participants also commented on the time issue when they were discussing the challenges in teaching social studies. Donna, who remained quiet throughout much of the interview, was the first to speak up, saying, “Time restrictions.” Mike agreed with Donna, stating, “As someone said, we would need one or two more hours every day to teach whatever I want to teach.” In the focus group with Duvall Elementary, Elizabeth immediately exclaimed, “Time!” when asked what some of the challenges were when teaching social studies.

In her individual interview, Heidi stated that she based her instructional decisions on time. “I guess based on time . . . to be honest with you I only teach social studies . . . as a subject pretty much after the FCAT because before the FCAT basically . . . what I teach is what’s going to be tested.”

What Beliefs Do Fifth-Grade Teachers Have About Social Studies?

Part III of the beliefs and classroom practices survey asked respondents to rate belief statements toward social studies and social studies teaching using a Likert scale
with the following values: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), or Strongly Disagree (SD). Although self-reported and difficult to assess strictly through a multiple choice survey, these responses offer some insight into the beliefs teachers have about social studies and social studies teaching. Table 4 identifies the responses of the fifth-grade teachers about social studies and social studies teaching.
### Table 4

**Fifth-Grade Teacher Responses to Beliefs About Social Studies and Social Studies Teaching (in percentages)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is important to have an understanding of current events in social studies.</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to have an understanding of past historical events.</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social studies is important in helping us understand others’ perspectives.</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different perspectives on history are essential to a healthy democratic society.</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing social studies is important to me.</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy visiting historical sites when I travel.</td>
<td>-.7</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students should be taught to think critically and make value-based decisions about social issues.</td>
<td>-.7</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social studies is an essential part of the elementary curriculum.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy teaching social studies.</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy reading about social studies/history.</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More time is needed for social studies in the elementary grades.</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students should be provided with a global perspective of social studies that views the world and its people with understanding and concern.</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social studies is important because it teaches children how to live in a democracy.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy watching documentaries about events in history.</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy watching movies/TV shows based on historical events.</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social studies is important in helping students become good citizens.</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children should question social studies for alternative interpretations.</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without teaching social studies, the preservation of our democratic society could be endangered.</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social studies should have less importance than reading and math.</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social studies should have less importance because it is not a tested subject.</td>
<td>.0</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).*

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The responses above indicate predominantly agreeable responses to social studies and social studies teaching. Examining these responses as a whole and individually may allow for a deeper understanding of the reasons teachers teach social studies and the ways in which they teach social studies. In looking at the importance teachers place on social studies, a majority (99.5%) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that it is important to have an understanding of past historical events, while 100% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that it is important to have an understanding of current events in social studies and that social studies is important in helping us understand others’ perspectives.

The next several questions asked about the teachers’ own interest in social studies. The majority (99.5%) of teachers’ strongly agreed or agreed that knowing social studies was important to them. Furthermore, 96.0% indicated that they enjoy reading about social studies/history, 91% enjoy watching documentaries about events in history, 92.5% enjoy watching movies/TV shows about events in history, and 97.5% enjoy visiting historical sites when they travel. The majority (97.5%) of teachers also strongly agreed or agreed that they enjoy teaching social studies. These favorable responses indicating an interest in social studies may be representative of the fact that the teachers chose to participate in this survey about social studies due to a high interest in social studies. In looking at social studies teaching, 95.5% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that social studies is an essential part of the curriculum and that more time is needed for social studies in the elementary grades (95.0%). In looking at the importance of social studies, 73.6% of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that it should have less importance than reading and math, while 23.9% of teachers agreed that it should have less importance than reading and math and 2.5% strongly agreed that it should have
less importance than reading and math. Furthermore, 84.1% of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that social studies should have less importance because it is not a tested subject, while 13.9% agreed with this statement and 2.0% strongly agreed with this statement.

Several questions from the focus group interviews attempted to gain an understanding of teachers’ beliefs about social studies. Participants were asked in what ways they felt social studies was important in fifth grade. Several teachers talked about building a foundation for the students to prepare them for middle school.

Elizabeth commented, “They need to build that foundation of their knowledge because it is a lot. Once you get out into the real world you need to know about . . . the Bill of Rights . . . what you’re guaranteed and taxes . . .”

Eve stated, “Fifth-grade is a real good introduction to what lies ahead. . . .”

Rob addressed the issues they’ll have in middle school if they don’t get the content in elementary school. “They’re transitioning to middle school where they’re going to have social studies. . . . You can’t just put them in middle school and they have no background knowledge whatsoever about social studies.”

*What Resources Do Fifth-Grade Teachers Use To Teach Social Studies?*

Part IV of the beliefs and classroom practices survey addressed the classroom practices fifth-grade teachers use to teach social studies. This was further divided into four sections: resources, classroom practices, assessments, and instructional decisions. All four sections used a Likert scale that asked respondents to indicate how often, frequently (at least 1x per week), sometimes (3-4x per month), occasionally (1-2x per month), and rarely/never (0-1x per year), they used certain resources or made certain
decisions pertaining to the teaching of social studies. Table 5 displays the resources teachers indicated they used frequently, at least one time per week.

Table 5

*Classroom Resources Used by Fifth-Grade Teachers in Social Studies Instruction At Least Once Per Week as Determined Through a Survey of 201 Fifth-Grade Teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines/Newspapers for Kids (Time, SS Weekly, etc.)</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>55.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Aids (posters, graphs, charts, speakers)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Fiction</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videos</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Software</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Source Documents (firsthand accounts, letters, documents, etc.)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown, the majority of respondents used the textbook frequently (62.6%) followed closely by the use of magazines and newspapers for kids (55.2%). A large group of respondents (70.8%) indicated that they sometimes or occasionally use historical fiction, and 72.4% of respondents indicated that they sometimes or occasionally use videos. Conversely, primary source documents and computer software were used the least. Thirty-four percent of respondents indicated that they rarely or never use primary source documents such as firsthand accounts, letters or documents, and 31.3% of respondents indicated that they rarely or never use computer software.

Several teachers in the focus group interview sessions discussed external resources that they use other than the textbook. In the focus group interview with the self-selected teachers, they discussed both print and nonprint resources they use. Two teachers
discussed programs that teach them how to use materials to expand the teaching of social studies concepts. The teachers seemed to express a greater interest in these resources than in the state adopted textbook. Patty commented:

I have the We The People series and I’m actually going to Virginia this summer for a week... They took the Constitution and the government and they put it into kid language and I used it in its full capacity this year and loved it... They’re going to teach me how to teach the Constitution to intermediate kids... I teach right into We the People and don’t touch the textbook for about three weeks and they come out of it and know it.

Donna described her work with Teachers’ Curriculum Institute (TCI):

I also use Social Studies Alive and History Alive from TCI. It’s like an outside supplement... I’m part of a grant program that actually allowed me to have a full class set and it’s a simpler version of the text of social studies... Several teachers also expressed an interest in technological resources. “United Streaming is good. They have just an endless supply of visual [sic] for social studies topics... they have archival footage that’s really good to use.”

In her individual interview, Janet mentioned that she uses the textbook and bases her teaching off that. She also mentioned technology. “… I use the videos from United Streaming. They’re usually good.”

In another individual interview with Heidi, she mentioned that she doesn’t use a lot of resources; however, she also mentioned using technology. “I don’t use too many resources... the textbook, the Internet... United Streaming a little bit because I can do searches for specific things...”
Other teachers indicated they use resources such as Time 4 Kids and historical novels. It appears that most of the excitement about resources came from the teachers who had some outside experience with resources. The overwhelming consensus seemed to be that the textbook was boring and too difficult for students and that there are a large number of topics to get through. Some comments in regard to this were:

“. . . the social studies text can be very boring if you just read the text. . .”

“I think we could have a simpler social studies book . . . .”

“. . . the fifth-grade textbook . . . is so much, it would be nicer to focus on a smaller time period . . . .”

“I think the reading material, though, is really difficult for children to read. . . .”

“It’s too much for them in terms of content.”

*What Classroom Practices Do Fifth-Grade Teachers Use To Teach Social Studies?*

The second section of part IV asked teachers to use the same scale, frequently (at least 1x per week), sometimes (3-4x per month), occasionally (1-2x per month), and rarely/never (0-1x per year), to indicate how often they used particular classroom practices when teaching social studies. These practices are based on the recommendations by Zemelman et al. (1998) for best practice teaching in social studies. Table 6 displays the self-reported classroom practices the teachers indicated they used frequently, at least one time per week.
Table 6

*Classroom Practices Used by Fifth-Grade Teachers in Social Studies Instruction At Least Once Per Week as Determined Through a Survey of 201 Fifth-Grade Teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students reading in class</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>79.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building upon students’ prior knowledge</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>70.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students writing in class</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active involvement by students</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>58.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inviting discussion that challenges</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students’ thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using mixed ability grouping</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>50.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use meaningful evaluation</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Learning</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using reflective dialogue between teacher and student</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-depth coverage of topics</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploratory, open-ended questioning</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring students’ understanding of other cultures</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring students’ own backgrounds and cultures in the classroom</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring other cultures’ approaches to social studies concepts</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students debating in class</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requiring rote memorization of facts</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing students choice in topics for inquiry</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enlisting the wider community as a resource</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that 17 of the statements were derived from Zemelman et al. (1998); however, the statement about requiring rote memorization of fact is not considered a best practice. Zemelman et al. emphasize the importance of student thinking rather than the memorization of decontextualized facts. Therefore, this question was
reversed in scoring so that those who selected using it “rarely” or “never” scored higher than those who selected using it “frequently.”

The practice most frequently used by fifth-grade teachers, students reading in class (78.8%), seems to match with the most frequently used resources, the textbook and magazines and newspapers for kids, as reported in the previous section. Along with having students read in class, 66.0% of teachers also frequently utilize students writing in class; however, 33 teachers (17.0%) frequently have students debate in class. Interestingly, 98 teachers (50.0%) invite discussion that challenges students’ thinking and 115 teachers (58.7%) frequently incorporate active involvement by students. Based upon the data, teachers do not appear to use debate as a way to challenge students’ thinking or as a way to promote active involvement. Approximately half of the teachers frequently use cooperative learning (48.5%) and mixed ability grouping (50.3%). The classroom practices that were rarely or never used are enlisting the wider community as a resource (38.5%), frequently allowing students choice in topics for inquiry (9.7%), and rote memorization of fact (29.4%).

As indicated in the theoretical framework in Chapter One, Evans (1989) identifies five typologies in which we can categorize teachers’ conceptions of history. Evans’s five typologies are: storyteller, scientific historian, relativist/reformer, cosmic philosopher, and eclectic. These typologies are presented here as one way teachers’ classroom practices can be categorized.

While the quantitative data does not allow for this type of categorization, the qualitative data were coded according to Evans’s typologies (see Appendix K) and provide some classification of the reported teaching styles of the participating teachers.
In the focus group interviews there was a trend of discussing all that is wrong with education and why social studies is not taught more. Many of the teachers seemed eager to discuss what other teachers were not doing and what students were not doing, rather than discussing what they themselves were doing in the classroom.

Furthermore, in the individual interviews, the participants did not always elaborate on their responses. The researcher utilized wait time and asked questions about the responses to gain further information; however, this did not always result in further discussion. Some of the more detailed responses came from the focus group of teachers who self-selected to participate in the second phase of the study. While this group of teachers also commented on what other teachers were not doing and how students lacked knowledge, they were able to return their conversations to their own teaching and often gave detailed explanations of their teaching strategies.

Rob, who was the first to respond to most questions, specifically stated that he liked to teach social studies through storytelling. “. . . the kids are fascinated because it’s storytelling. It’s true stories and it’s stories that took place in the past. . . .” Later, he commented on how he teaches, saying, “. . . so when I try to teach it, I try to teach it as storytelling. . . . I tell it as a story and they just, they soak this stuff in, it’s amazing.” Conversely, in other comments from Rob about his teaching, he seemed to elicit more of a scientific historian approach. This approach sees the teacher as a guide rather than an arbitrator of truth (Evans, 1989).

I try to present things very fairly. I try to present both sides. . . . I think as people responsible for shaping children we have an obligation to let them make the
decision and us just present the two different sides fairly and accurately without trying to influence their outcome or their decision.

Patty also described teaching strategies that fit with the characteristics of a scientific historian. “I think it teaches them . . . an alternative way to look at a given historical situation. . . .”

Both Rob and Patty seem to use the best practice that invites discussion that challenges student thinking. Fifty percent of the teachers who participated in the beliefs and classroom practices survey indicated they used this best practice frequently, at least one time per week.

Mike often discussed his foreign students and the challenges they had in learning social studies information that was different from their own country’s history.

. . . I’ve mentioned that the fact that the students I have they are from the countries [sic]. . . . It is very important that they know the country, the physical aspects of it, and the government which is totally different from most of the government [sic] we have inside America. . . . Teaching them the different houses and how we go about things being done, they need to know that. For example how the election is led in this country is definitely different from most of what they have heard of . . . .

Mike could most likely be categorized as a relativist/reformer because he tries to present history as the background for understanding current issues, especially issues in his students’ own countries. Furthermore, Mike appears to be utilizing the best practices of exploring students’ understanding of other cultures, specifically the American culture.
as a foreign culture to his diverse students, as well as the best practice that allows students to explore their own backgrounds and cultures in the classroom.

*How Do Fifth-Grade Teachers Assess Their Students in Social Studies?*

The next section in part IV asked respondents to indicate how often they use various assessment methods to assess their students in social studies frequently (at least 1x per week), sometimes (3-4x per month), occasionally (1-2x per month), and rarely/never (0-1x per year). Table 7 displays the types of assessments the fifth-grade teachers indicated they used frequently, at least one time per week.

**Table 7**

*Assessments Used by Fifth-Grade Teachers in Social Studies Instruction At Least Once Per Week as Determined Through a Survey of 201 Fifth-Grade Teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open-ended question test</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple-choice tests</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay question test</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True/False test</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolios</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While Table 7 indicates the assessments that teachers used most frequently, at least one time per week, it is important to note that all teachers may not be assessing students on a weekly basis; therefore, it is important to look at the assessments used 3-4 times per month and 1-2 times per month. In looking at the assessments teachers use sometimes (3-4x per month), the use of the assessments follows the same pattern as that for the assessments used frequently (at least 1x per week). For example, in both of these
categories open-ended tests were used the most (27.8% and 40.2% respectively), followed by multiple-choice tests (24.2% and 36.1%), presentations (17.6% and 36.3%), essay question tests (16.6% and 33.2%), projects (13.4% and 30.9%), true/false tests (11.1% and 25.8%), and lastly portfolios (8.8% and 10.9%). In the category of assessments used occasionally (1-2x per month), projects were used the most (44.8%), followed by presentations (33.2%), essay question tests (31.6%), true/false tests (29.5%), multiple-choice tests (29.4%), portfolios (23.8%), and finally open-ended question tests (23.7%). The use of projects and presentations 1-2 times per month may be due to the fact that they often are time consuming.

_How Do Fifth-Grade Teachers Make Their Instructional Decisions in Social Studies?

The last section in part IV asked respondents to indicate how often they make instructional decisions in social studies based on certain factors frequently (at least 1x per week), sometimes (3-4x per month), occasionally (1-2x per month), and rarely/never (0-1x per year). Table 8 displays the factors the fifth-grade teachers indicated they based their instructional decisions on frequently (at least 1x per week).
Table 8

Factors Fifth-Grade Teachers Base Their Instructional Decisions On in Social Studies

Instruction At Least Once Per Week as Determined Through a Survey of 201 Fifth-Grade Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>73.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunshine State Standards</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>71.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Interest</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Mandates</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both time (73.2%) and the Sunshine State Standards (71.2%) were indicated as most frequently used as the basis for instructional decisions in social studies. The factor least attributed to instructional decision making in social studies was professional development that the teachers had participated in. Only 22.2% of respondents indicated that they frequently based their instructional decisions in social studies on this factor. Of interest is that even though most respondents seemed to indicate favorable responses toward social studies and social studies teaching, only 38.1% said they frequently base instructional decisions on personal interest. It appears that teachers are using the state standards rather than personal interest to make instructional decisions, which is one of the reasons states adopted standards of curriculum.

What Knowledge Do Fifth-Grade Teachers Have About Social Studies?

Fourteen teachers participated in phase two of the study, a knowledge survey adapted from the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI, 2007). This sixty item multiple-choice test contained questions in the following areas: American History, Political
Philosophy and American Government, America and the World, and The Market Economy. Most teachers took approximately 30 minutes to complete the test, while some teachers took closer to one hour to complete the test. Several participants commented that the test was very difficult. Table 9 summarizes the number of participants (N), the means, and the standard deviations of the variables related to this test.

Table 9

Sample, Means, and Standard Deviations for Participating Fifth-Grade Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge (all 60 items)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27.9286</td>
<td>7.85899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American History (17 items)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.6429</td>
<td>3.36514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America and The World (16 items)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.1429</td>
<td>2.59755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Philosophy and American Government (14 items)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.2143</td>
<td>1.52812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Market Economy (13 items)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.9286</td>
<td>2.16490</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comprehensive scores on the entire 60 item test ranged from the lowest score of 18 correct out of 60 (30%) to the highest score 46 correct out of 60 (76.6%). The mean of the test scores was 53.4%. Two participants scored at a passing level, above 70%. The person scoring the highest, Patty Allen (76.6%) expressed an interest in social studies. “I had a personal interest in it.” The second highest scoring participant, Rob McCall, (71.6%) indicated that he had a lot of content knowledge through his schooling. “I have a major in history and a minor in education so I had two to three courses of history every semester that I was in college so I really have a very thorough history background.”

While the findings of this test are not measurable against ISI’s findings due to the different sets of participants, it is interesting to note that the 2006 findings by ISI show that the average mean score for the 7,000 college seniors who took the test, was 54.2%.
Beyond analyzing the test as a whole, the four components of the test, American History, Political Philosophy and American Government, America and the World, and The Market Economy were also analyzed as subsections.

In the subsection of American History five teachers (35.7%) scored above 70%. In Political Philosophy and American Government, no teachers scored higher than 61.5%. In America and the World, one teacher (.07%) scored above a 70% and in the last section, The Market Economy, two teachers (14.2%) scored above 70% with one teacher scoring 92.3%. In further looking at the results of the test, the two passing scores on the composite test and all but one of the passing scores in each subsection came from participants in the focus group that was generated from the beliefs and classroom practices survey. These participants self-selected to participate in the second stage of this study, which may indicate a greater interest and knowledge of social studies.

For the remainder of the chapter each research question is identified and addressed according to the quantitative data that were obtained. Data obtained from the beliefs and classroom practices survey were used to address all six research questions. Data obtained from the knowledge survey were used to address questions 2, 3, 4, and 6, and qualitative data obtained from the focus group interviews were used to provide contextual data for the study as well as empirical data to address questions 1 and 2 (see Appendix L).

Quantitative data are presented using Pearson correlation coefficients for questions 1 and 2 with an alpha level of 0.05 and using two-tailed significance to determine significant correlation. Regression analyses were used for questions 3 through 6. The intercorrelations between each variable are shown in Table 10.
Research Question 1: What is the relationship between fifth-grade teachers’ beliefs about social studies and their self-reported classroom practices?

As the findings indicate in Table 10, there were significant correlations between teachers’ beliefs about social studies and the resources they indicated they used and between teachers’ beliefs about social studies and the best practice strategies they indicated they used. In addition, of the six independent variables having to do with instructional decision-making in social studies, three of the six variables had a significant correlation with beliefs: time, Sunshine State Standards, and personal interest. To answer the research question, a relationship exists between teachers’ beliefs about social studies and their use of resources, teachers’ beliefs about social studies and their use of best practice strategies, teachers’ beliefs about social studies and their use of time as a factor of instructional decision-making, teachers’ beliefs about social studies and their use of the Sunshine State Standards in instructional decision-making, and teachers’ beliefs about social studies and their use of personal interest as a factor in instructional decision-making.
Table 10

Intercorrelation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beliefs</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Best Practices</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Sunshine State Standards</th>
<th>Textbook</th>
<th>Professional Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.220*</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>.174</td>
<td>.226*</td>
<td>.147*</td>
<td>-.030</td>
<td>.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>.220*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.574*</td>
<td>.680*</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>.243*</td>
<td>.154*</td>
<td>.326*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>.574*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.726*</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>.259*</td>
<td>.160*</td>
<td>.362*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Practices</td>
<td>.174*</td>
<td>.680*</td>
<td>.726*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.209*</td>
<td>.303*</td>
<td>.206*</td>
<td>.250*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>.226*</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>.209*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.261*</td>
<td>.144*</td>
<td>.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunshine State Standards</td>
<td>.147*</td>
<td>.243*</td>
<td>.259*</td>
<td>.303*</td>
<td>.261*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.245*</td>
<td>.147*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook</td>
<td>-.030</td>
<td>.154*</td>
<td>.160*</td>
<td>.206*</td>
<td>.144*</td>
<td>.245*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.151*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>.326*</td>
<td>.362*</td>
<td>.250*</td>
<td>.107</td>
<td>.147*</td>
<td>.151*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Mandates</td>
<td>-.029</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.277*</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>.161*</td>
<td>.339*</td>
<td>.242*</td>
<td>.385*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Interest</td>
<td>.205*</td>
<td>.289*</td>
<td>.311*</td>
<td>.381*</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>.121</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.159*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>-.180</td>
<td>-.090</td>
<td>-.205</td>
<td>-.018</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.476</td>
<td>.507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American History</td>
<td>-.101</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td>.148</td>
<td>-.046</td>
<td>-.013</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>.652*</td>
<td>.557*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Philosophy and Government</td>
<td>.129</td>
<td>-.056</td>
<td>-.053</td>
<td>-.276</td>
<td>-.547</td>
<td>-.239</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>.705*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America and the World</td>
<td>.144</td>
<td>-.246</td>
<td>-.191</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.218</td>
<td>.335</td>
<td>.443</td>
<td>.230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Market Economy</td>
<td>-.123</td>
<td>-.476</td>
<td>-.264</td>
<td>-.437</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>-.174</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Table 10 (continued)

Intercorrelation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Administrative Mandates</th>
<th>Personal Interest</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>American History</th>
<th>Political Philosophy and Government</th>
<th>America and the World</th>
<th>The Market Economy</th>
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Note. * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Empirical Qualitative Data to Inform Research Question 1: What is the relationship between fifth-grade teachers’ beliefs about social studies and their self-reported classroom practices?

Empirical qualitative data were primarily generated from focus group interviews. These data are discussed here as a way to further address research question one concerning the relationship between fifth-grade teachers’ beliefs about social studies and their self-reported classroom practices.

Nespor (1987) suggests there are four features that are characteristic of beliefs: existential presumption, alternativity, affective and evaluative loading, and episodic structure. Inherent in the theoretical framework of this study is an analysis of how fifth-grade teachers’ beliefs affect the way they teach social studies. Table 11 defines the features that are characteristic of beliefs according to Nespor. Evidence of these features emerged from the focus group and individual interviews conducted with the fifth-grade teacher participants. Specific examples that illustrate these features are presented below.

Table 11
Nespor’s Four Features Characteristic of Beliefs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belief</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existential Presumption</td>
<td>Beliefs a person holds true. Usually not affected by others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternativity</td>
<td>Creating alternative situations based on a perceived ideal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective and Evaluative Loading</td>
<td>Separation between knowledge of a topic and feelings about a topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episodic Structure</td>
<td>Drawing upon previous events in own life to frame future events.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In the focus group interview where the teachers self-selected to participate after completing the beliefs and classroom practices survey, several responses seemed to
center on existential presumption and episodic structure. Two teachers, Rob and Robin, both of whom grew up in New York, expressed concern that students aren’t learning as much now as when they were in school. Rob stated, “. . . it was more detailed than just general history as we teach it now.” Robin said, “I’m going to go with Rob. I think that in elementary we definitely studied more than what our students receive now.” Because of their experiences as children and the way they perceive how social studies should be taught, they have an existential presumption that students are not receiving as much social studies today as they did in the past.

Another teacher, Patty, a 16-year veteran of fifth-grade, expressed an existential presumption about other teachers. “I think they’re [teachers] afraid of history, like they’re afraid of science. They don’t have the content . . . they kind of skate their way through it, which is a disservice to the kids.” A strong sentiment that most of the teachers reiterated was that the students do not have any content knowledge to go into middle school. Some of their comments were, “I have kids in the fifth-grade that don’t know what the names of Columbus’s boats were.”

“. . . they need the foundation. . . . I had a student who thought the world was flat! I had to stop and pick up my jaw off the floor.”

“My upcoming fourth-graders . . . come in with zero knowledge about the difference between a country and a city, the difference between a state and a country. . . .”

These sentiments seem to reveal an existential presumption that students do not have content knowledge or a foundation of social studies. If students in fact are missing social studies content knowledge, this may further develop into an issue with social studies in
the secondary school, as teachers may assume that their students are coming in with knowledge and are able to build upon that knowledge.

Understanding the existential presumption these teachers have about their students’ content knowledge provides an understanding of some of their self-reported classroom practices. Rob emphasized the need to teach social studies. “You can’t just put them in middle school and they have no background knowledge whatsoever about social studies.” Robin agreed with Rob, saying, “. . . It’s my responsibility to tell them there’s different people out there, there are different cultures . . .”

In one of the individual interviews, Heidi, who grew up in Trinidad before coming to the United States in middle school, also expressed an existential presumption because she indicated that she felt kids would think social studies is boring. “I think a lot of kids think it’s going to be boring because I guess they’re just thinking, oh, it’s just sort of a bunch of stuff that’s removed from them. . . .” When discussing her teaching, she said, “I just jump right into it. . . . It might seem boring and then I show them a picture and they’re like, oh, so that’s why. . . . [I] kind of I guess bait them a little bit.”

Mike, a teacher who grew up in Haiti and was retiring from teaching at the end of this school year, seemed to possess the feature of episodic structure because he drew upon his own experiences as a student to determine what he thought students should be taught now. “. . . I remember in social studies we had a citizenship package where they taught children how to be good citizenship [sic] and all the virtue and propriety of good citizens. I believe we are missing that right now. . . .” Later, when discussing his teaching, he said, “. . . knowing how this country has been built and the branches of
government. . . these are the topics we should really bring forth that will definitely make a round out [sic] citizen, the student.”

In the other focus group interview with the teachers at Duvall Elementary, the teachers seemed to address the feature of episodic structure more than anything else. They often described their experiences growing up as a child as reasons why they taught the way they do today. Elizabeth, a young teacher in her fourth year of teaching, described her interest in social studies.

My family brought me up on it . . . we traveled to the Southern states and he [my dad] started collecting Civil War artifacts and then it turned into Spanish artifacts from the Spanish American War. He’s got swords, mostly like from the Civil War. I think he has a hat from one of the wars . . . He’s got medals, and my grandparents always talk about it so my family helped to bring it home for me and I like sharing that.

Another teacher, Gina, drew upon her experiences in school as a foundation for how she likes to teach.

When I was in high school, we had an international . . . fair day. Students that are from different countries . . . would dress according to what they are from . . . they would cook food . . . and we’d go around and taste the different foods and learn information about the different countries and students would do dances that are from their country. . . . I love that day because I was actually able to test out different types of food that I never tasted before.

Later, she described a hands-on experience she used with her students.
Last year we had an election at the school. . . . I had the students come up with their own party names . . . let’s say Liberty . . . They figured out what Liberty meant so their model was based on what Liberty meant. . . . We held an election. . . . They had to do their speeches. . . . They had the secret service men. . . . The whole class was very much involved. They were so serious they did not crack not one smile [sic].

Gina seemed to express that she enjoyed having hands-on experiences as a child; therefore, she wanted to use this same type of structure in her classroom.

In another individual interview, Janet, a fifth year teacher, expressed a love of social studies stemming from her family and school experiences and why she enjoys teaching it now.

. . . I was lucky to have very good social studies teachers. . . . I had an interest in it at a young age. My family is very into history. I grew up in a house with lots of books and movies and my parents always talk about history. My brother is a history buff so it was always around me. . . . I grew up in Massachusetts which is very historical. . . . I love the Revolutionary War. . . . I love that I can teach it to them and I have that knowledge growing up in New England and I get to talk about the things that I know first, you know, firsthand experience of going and visiting those places.

Also evident in the interviews was the feeling that social studies may not get the attention it deserves. At the end of the focus group interview with the teachers at Duvall Elementary, Elizabeth commented that she wished social studies were taught more,
stating, “Maybe we’ll get an FCAT test where we have to teach it.” JoAnne seemed despondent about this statement and remarked,

I would hate for it to be taught just because it’s on the FCAT . . . Social studies is so interesting. . . . It’s one of those subjects. . . . that can just be enjoyable for kids and I don’t think it should be . . . stressed on the FCAT.

When discussing the importance of social studies, Rob illustrated how social studies needs to be emphasized in order for students to have content knowledge. He used an example of how science has been emphasized at his school.

. . . in the last three or four years our principal made the decision to teach science outside of the classroom so we have a dedicated science teacher and we’re just now starting to see improvements in the FCATS because it’s the . . . second, third and fourth grade kids coming up that are having the content knowledge where the first year, the fifth grade kids had . . . zero content knowledge because we didn’t teach it.

When addressing the fact that some teachers do not teach social studies as much as they should, Rob stated, “I think you can teach social studies through reading as well.”

Robin also commented on how social studies is often put on the back burner and teachers should look at teaching social studies differently and teach it through reading.

. . . They look at, oh, it’s just something else I have to do and it’s not being tested so let me just put it on . . . on the back burner here. But if . . . they look at it like . . . I can relate what’s happening to what happened and then I can still teach reading through it and so forth. . . .
A further area that may help in understanding teachers’ beliefs centers on an understanding of their epistemological beliefs about social studies. The way a teacher views the epistemology of social studies may impact the classroom strategies and instructional decisions he or she makes. Before looking at the qualitative data, it is helpful to look at statements from the beliefs and classroom practices survey pertaining to epistemological beliefs.

Nearly all respondents, 99.5%, indicated agreement with a statement about different perspectives on history being essential to a healthy democratic society. Another statement asked whether children should question social studies for alternate interpretations. The majority of respondents (92.2%) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. A third statement asked whether students should be taught to think critically and make value-based decisions about social issues. Again, the majority of respondents (98.0%) indicated they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. These positive responses seem to indicate a mostly interpretive epistemological belief among the participating teachers.

To further understand this objective versus interpretive epistemology, participating teachers in the focus group and individual interviews were asked the following question. “Do you feel social studies should be based on facts or open to interpretation?” Overall, most participants indicated that they felt it should be based on both facts and interpretations. Janet, from Marshall Elementary, started out stating that she would base it on facts, but then discussed ways she would use interpretation.

I guess the basis would have to be on facts, but . . . definitely leads to discussion on interpretations. . . . I guess you have to be careful with where it goes at this
young age but open-ended questions are always good, getting opinions, and getting those conversations started at a young age. . . .

Heidi, from Grant Elementary, seemed to embrace a more factually-based epistemology. I think at this level, my opinion at the elementary level, I would say it is good for them to get a lot of facts. . . . A little bit open to interpretation, but I think as they get older and for them to really be able to interpret things, they need to understand the basics. So I, at this level, I would think it is important for them to really have the foundation in facts with a little bit of interpretation. But as they get older, then I would tilt the scales more toward open, having it more open to interpretation; but at the fifth-grade level I would weigh the facts a little heavier at this stage for these, this age student.

The discussion with the self-selected focus group encompassed objective and interpretive epistemologies, with many stating that both were necessary. Mike started the conversation by stating that he believed social studies should be based on both facts and interpretation.

It should be both. Because whatever is happening right now . . . its cause is something that happened before and . . . fact only won’t bring it so much life. . . . I like to make them understand that although we cannot reinvent history, it’s done, it’s already done but what can you do for the future?

Rob countered Mike’s statement emphasizing facts.

I take a little different spin on it. I think that yes, I agree both, but the reality is that there are facts and when you teach the facts, you teach the facts. When you teach things that can be interpreted differently . . . I’ll use myself as an example. I
would . . . kids would never know how I vote. . . . I try to present things very fairly. I try to present both sides. . . . I think as people responsible for shaping children we have an obligation to let them make the decision and us just present the two different sides fairly and accurately without trying to influence their outcome or their decision.

A discussion ensued where several others built upon what Rob said.

Robin, who often seemed in agreement with Rob, stated, “I agree with that 100%. I’m more to the facts. I’m there to present the facts . . . and then let them think and form their own opinions.” She also indicated that she is there to “play devil’s advocate,” to get them started and then let them come up with their own interpretations.

Amy had an interesting perspective in that she acknowledged that there could be more than one side to factual knowledge. “I think it’s important for the students to know that what’s fact to us as Americans would not necessarily be fact to a German. You’re not going to learn the same history in Japan. . . .”

Patty spoke to the link between facts and interpretation.

I think you can’t have one without the other. You can’t have interpretation if you don’t have the facts. You can’t have thought if you don’t know what you’re thinking about so I would think the facts are the starting point for teaching the history or the geography or the government. You have a place, this is actually what did happen, now, let’s talk about what the possibilities were.

Amy made another interesting last point in this discussion about the viability of facts. “I think sometimes, as many facts as you want it to be, 50 years later they uncover that those facts really aren’t facts but that there was some bias to whatever was written
down.” She continued by discussing how she addresses this with students by simply telling them that facts may change over time as things are uncovered.

It is evident that both objective and interpretive epistemologies are present in the belief systems of these participants. Furthermore, the responses from these participants seem to influence their self-reported classroom practices, as most seem to justify what they do in the classroom and the strategies they employ because of the epistemological beliefs they have.

*Research Question 2: What is the relationship between fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge of social studies and their self-reported classroom practices?*

As indicated in Table 10, there were no significant correlations between teachers’ knowledge of social studies and their self-reported classroom practices. Furthermore, the only significant correlations between the subsection of American History and classroom practices occurred between American History and the use of the textbook as a factor in instructional decision-making and American History and the use of professional development as a factor in instructional decision-making. The next subsection, Political Philosophy and American Government, showed one significant correlation between government and the use of professional development as a factor in instructional decision-making.

The findings for the last two sections of the knowledge survey indicate that there were no significant correlations between the summated scores for America and the World and classroom practices or for The Market Economy and classroom practices.

Therefore, to answer the research question, there was no relationship overall between teachers’ knowledge of these areas and their self-reported classroom practices.
Furthermore, the only significant relationships occurred between American History and the use of the textbook as a factor in instructional decision-making, American History and the use of professional development as a factor in instructional decision-making, and Political Philosophy and American Government and the use of professional development as a factor in instructional decision-making.

*Empirical Qualitative Data to Inform Research Question 2: What is the relationship between fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge of social studies and their self-reported classroom practices?*

Empirical qualitative data pertaining to fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge of social studies were primarily generated from the knowledge survey. However, several questions from the focus group interviews were intended to obtain information about teachers’ knowledge of social studies. While these data may not provide conclusive evidence about knowledge, they may be helpful in informing research question two concerning the relationship between fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge about social studies and their self-reported classroom practices.

One of the frameworks guiding this study is Shulman’s Model of Pedagogical Reasoning and Action (1987). Shulman identifies six stages that describe how teachers’ knowledge can be transformed for effective instruction: Comprehension, Transformation, Instruction, Evaluation, Reflection, and New Comprehensions. It is necessary to remember that these are not fixed stages and that some may not occur in certain instances of teaching (Shulman).

The qualitative data were coded according to these six stages (see Appendix K), although only the stages of Comprehension, Transformation, and Instruction were evident
within the data. The six stages are further discussed in Chapter 5; however, data pertaining to these first three stages are presented below.

A question in the focus group interview asked teachers about their preparation in college for teaching social studies. The teachers appear to be operating at varying levels of comprehension based upon their preparation at the college level.

Most of the responses indicate that the teachers had a methods course in social studies but very little content in social studies. While discussing this question, most of the teachers seemed to have a negative feeling about their college preparation.

Patty shared, “. . . we had nothing. It was methods. There was no content [laughter]. Methods, methods, methods, no content and that was true for not just for social studies but all subjects, it was . . . very little content.” Donna concurred, “It was just a methods class, how to teach social studies.” Lisa, who has an undergraduate degree in fine arts and completed her elementary education certification through a Master’s plus certification program, remarked. “They don’t teach about social studies or really prepare you to teach social studies at all I don’t think. I’m kind of drawing from my undergraduate studies and maybe high school when I teach.” In her individual interview, Janet couldn’t seem to remember much about social studies courses. “I know in my student teaching I taught social studies units but . . . I don’t remember learning about it in my college classes.” Only one teacher, Elizabeth, relayed a positive experience with social studies in her teacher education program.

I went to an awesome class. . . . She [teacher] did a Saturday class and it was all day Saturday for five Saturdays and I went to school in Tampa and I actually drove down to Ft. Myers for the day cause it was offered through a different
campus. . . . It was a lot of good stuff that we got from there. Not only did she incorporate the different areas of social studies. . . . We did a lot of different stuff. She showed us how to do all these projects and it wasn’t as much teaching us content, it was teaching us how to teach the content.

Some teachers indicated that they had to learn the content on their own. Robin felt that she got methods courses in college but learned the rest on her own.

I think what helped me is my husband is a history buff and all we have, you know, is history books and history books and you know all he does is read nonfiction and watch the history channel so that helped me when it came to the classroom to teach it.

Some teachers appeared to be in the Transformation stage, or the stage where teachers must pedagogically understand their content so they can teach it to students (Shulman, 1987).

When asked what she thinks fifth-grade teachers need to know to teach social studies effectively, Patty emphasized making connections.

I think an ability to connect current to the past is vital . . . because when kids are saying why do I need to learn this or this isn’t my story or this isn’t my heritage, you need to be able to give them a jumping off point of well, it is connected to you in this way.

Mike, a native of Haiti, focused on how his lessons needed to be tailored to his students, who were primarily from other countries.

I’ve mentioned that the fact that the students I have, they are from the countries [sic] . . . . It is very important that they know the country, the physical aspects of
it, and the government which is totally different from most of the government
[sic] we have. . . . For example how the election is led in this country is definitely
different from most of what they have heard of.

The last stage evident in the focus group interview responses involves Instruction,
or the actual performance of teaching (Shulman). The following data provide information
about two teachers who have varying degrees of content knowledge of social studies and
the effect this knowledge may have on their teaching.

In the individual interview with Heidi, she appeared reserved in her responses to
the interview questions. Although she indicated on her beliefs survey that she enjoyed
teaching social studies, she offered vague responses that neither elicited a like or dislike
for the subject. For comparative purposes, Heidi scored a 55% on the knowledge survey.
When asked how she approaches her teaching of social studies she responded,

I approach it, I try to, I mean of course you try to always make it fun as much as
possible. I try to make it, it’s kind of a good subject to teach where you can have
it you know where you can have it be a little bit hands on, a little bit of reading, a
little bit of technology, you know maybe watching something on video cause a lot
of times you can read something and it’s a little removed from the students but if
they see a picture or if they see like a little video snippet of it, it really helps them
to like it brings it to life for them, so I like to do like a mixture, different ways, to
teach, to approach, you know teaching social studies.

While an interview does not give enough information to get a real picture of
someone’s teaching, Heidi appears vague about what she does and unwilling or unable to
put into words specific strategies that she uses.
In the focus group interview with the self-selected teachers, Patty, who indicated on the beliefs survey that she enjoyed teaching social studies and who professed early on in the interview that she became “hooked on” social studies when she was in school, was the highest scorer on the knowledge survey with a 76%. When discussing how she teaches social studies, she offered multiple representations of her strategies.

I use the theme of resistance. . . . It’s a reoccurring theme in my class because it offers them the idea of you’ve got this group of people, and you’ve got this group of people and each has their own agenda and one is going to be the victor and one is going to not win but what can the group that is not gonna win or the one that is not gonna survive, what can they do and when I, when I look at like the explorers coming over and there’s resistance from the Native Americans to a certain extent, and then we, you know the colonists come over, it’s there, it’s all the way through and I think it teaches them not to stand up and fight so to speak, but it teaches them an alternative way to look at a given historical situation.

Later, she talked about getting her students to become “thinkers.”

I like when they take it over. I like when they come back with the questions and they try to draw it to . . . what’s going on today and . . . it’s an interesting process to watch them become those thinkers again where they take on the information and they mull it around in their head and they come up with their own ideas.

Without observing Patty’s teaching firsthand it is difficult to categorize her teaching strategies; however, she seems to offer a deeper understanding of the content as she tries to find alternative ways to represent the information beyond the textbook.
Several teachers said they draw upon their undergraduate studies to assist them with the knowledge they need to teach fifth-grade social studies. Elizabeth mentioned that she has an undergraduate degree in fine arts and that she took a lot of courses in political science. She further commented, “I’m kind of drawing from my undergraduate studies and maybe high school when I teach.” She also mentioned that she previously taught sixth-grade social studies.

Rob emphasized his preparation for history due to his majoring in history. “I had two to three courses of history every semester that I was in college so I really have a very thorough history background.” He later commented that his knowledge of history allows him to teach in ways others may not be able to. “The reality for me is that because I know social studies, I know the history, when I teach it, I don’t really teach it through the text.”

The teachers in the self-selected focus group appeared to have a greater knowledge of history based upon their results from the knowledge survey and their self-reported knowledge from the focus group interview. This knowledge seemed to have some impact on their teaching practices.

*Research Question 3: Does teaching experience moderate the relationship between social studies beliefs and self-reported classroom practices?*

To determine if teaching experience moderated the relationship between teachers’ social studies beliefs and their self-reported classroom practices, a multiple regression was conducted for this moderator analysis. Table 12 shows the results of this analysis.
Table 12

*Regression Analysis of Teaching Experience to Beliefs and Classroom Practices*

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<th>Variable</th>
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<td>Personal Interest (question 69)</td>
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</table>

Note: *indicates significance at the .05 level

Teaching experience appeared to moderate the relationship between teachers’ beliefs about social studies and their use of the Sunshine State Standards in instructional decision-making. This shows a negative relationship; as teaching experience increased the correlation between teachers’ beliefs and the use of the Sunshine State Standards in instructional decision-making decreased. The longer that teachers teach, the less of a relationship there appears to be between their beliefs about social studies and their use of the Sunshine State Standards in instructional decision-making.

Research Question 4: Does teaching experience moderate the relationship between social studies knowledge and self-reported classroom practices?

A multiple regression was also conducted to determine if teaching experience moderated the relationship between social studies knowledge and self-reported classroom practices and between each subsection of social studies knowledge and self-reported classroom practices, American History, America and The World, Political Philosophy and American Government, and The Market Economy. No significance was found; thus,
teaching experience did not moderate this relationship. Years of experience did not have an effect on the relationship between social studies knowledge, including the four subsections of social studies knowledge, and self-reported classroom practices. Tables 13 through 17 show the regression analyses for these variables.

Table 13

*Regression Analysis of Teaching Experience to Knowledge and Classroom Practices*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>t</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Personal Interest (question 69)</td>
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<td>.352</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *indicates significance at the .05 level
Table 14

Regression Analysis of Teaching Experience to American History and Classroom Practices

<table>
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</table>

Note: *indicates significance at the .05 level

Table 15

Regression Analysis of Teaching Experience to America and The World and Classroom Practices

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</tr>
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<td>.651</td>
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<td>Time (question 64)</td>
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<td>.966</td>
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</tr>
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Note: *indicates significance at the .05 level
Table 16

*Regression Analysis of Teaching Experience to Political Philosophy and American Government and Classroom Practices*

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<td>.233</td>
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<td>.964</td>
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<td>Sunshine State Standards (question 65)</td>
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<td>.495</td>
</tr>
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<td>Textbook (question 66)</td>
<td>1.025</td>
<td>.332</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Development (question 67)</td>
<td>1.156</td>
<td>.277</td>
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<td>Administrative Mandates (question 68)</td>
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</table>

Note: *indicates significance at the .05 level

Table 17

*Regression Analysis of Teaching Experience to The Market Economy and Classroom Practices*

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<td>.668</td>
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<td>Assessment (questions 57-63)</td>
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<td>.232</td>
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<td>Time (question 64)</td>
<td>.945</td>
<td>.369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunshine State Standards (question 65)</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook (question 66)</td>
<td>.868</td>
<td>.408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development (question 67)</td>
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<td>.592</td>
</tr>
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<td>Administrative Mandates (question 68)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>.801</td>
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</table>

Note: *indicates significance at the .05 level
Research Question 5: Do demographic attributes moderate the relationship between social studies beliefs and self-reported classroom practices?

To determine if demographic attributes moderate the relationship between teachers’ social studies beliefs and their self-reported classroom practices, multiple regression analyses were run for the following variables: education level, age, and gender. Table 18 shows the results for education level.

Table 18

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Resources (questions 30-38)</td>
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<td>.186</td>
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<tr>
<td>Best Practice (questions 39-56)</td>
<td>.420</td>
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<td>Assessment (questions 57-63)</td>
<td>.084</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time (question 64)</td>
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<td>.843</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunshine State Standards (question 65)</td>
<td>-.503</td>
<td>.615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook (question 66)</td>
<td>-1.152</td>
<td>.251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development (question 67)</td>
<td>.980</td>
<td>.329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Mandates (question 68)</td>
<td>-.153</td>
<td>.878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Interest (question 69)</td>
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<td>.872</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *indicates significance at the .05 level

No significance was found; therefore, education level did not moderate the relationship between teachers’ social studies beliefs and their self-reported classroom practices. In other words, the professional education attainment among participating teachers did not appear to have an effect on the relationship between their beliefs and their self-reported classroom practices.
Table 19 shows the regression analysis for the second moderator variable, age.

### Table 19

*Regression Analysis of Age to Beliefs and Classroom Practices*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources (questions 30-38)</td>
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<td>.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Practice (questions 39-56)</td>
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<td>0.676</td>
<td>.500</td>
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<td>Time (question 64)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunshine State Standards (question 65)</td>
<td>-2.099*</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook (question 66)</td>
<td>0.364</td>
<td>.716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development (question 67)</td>
<td>0.264</td>
<td>.792</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administrative Mandates (question 68)</td>
<td>1.065</td>
<td>.289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Interest (question 69)</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>.954</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *indicates significance at the .05 level*

In the area of the Sunshine State Standards, age moderated the relationship between teachers’ beliefs about social studies and their self-reported classroom practices. This was a negative relationship; as the age of the teacher increases, there appeared to be less of a relationship between their beliefs and their use of the Sunshine State Standards in instructional decision-making.

Table 20 shows the regression analysis for the last moderator variable for this question, gender.
As indicated above, gender moderated the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their self-reported classroom practices in the areas of best practice and time. To better understand this relationship, separate correlation coefficients for males and females were run to determine how gender moderates these relationships. For females there was no significant correlation (p=.225) between their beliefs and their use of best practice strategies; however, for males there was a significant correlation (p=.019) between their beliefs and their use of best practice strategies. This indicates that for males a positive affinity in beliefs toward social studies was related to a positive affinity toward best practices reported as being used to teach social studies. Similarly, gender also moderated the relationship between teacher beliefs and time as an instructional factor of classroom practices. For females, there was no significant correlation (p=.053); however, for males there was a significant correlation (p=.003) between their beliefs about social studies and
their use of time in instructional decision-making. Again, for females there was no relationship between their beliefs about social studies and the instructional factor of time; however, for males there was a significant relationship between their beliefs about social studies and their use of time in instructional decision-making. It is important to remember that a small number of males participated in this survey. It is possible that in both of these situations, the males who took the effort to participate in this study value their teaching ability and are acutely aware of how they make their instructional decisions in social studies teaching. Furthermore, they may be more likely to identify their teaching strategies as best practice strategies because they may feel that all of their teaching strategies are effective teaching strategies.

*Research Question 6: Do demographic attributes moderate the relationship between social studies knowledge and self-reported classroom practices?*

Two of the three demographic attributes from question 5; education level, Bachelor’s, Master’s, Specialist, and Doctorate, and age, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, and over 60; were also analyzed to determine if they moderated the relationship between teachers’ social studies knowledge, including the four subsections of knowledge, American History, America and The World, Political Philosophy and American Government, and The Market Economy, and their self-reported classroom practices. Gender was not included because there were only two males who participated in the knowledge survey and this small number of male participants cannot effectively address this question. Table 21 presents the regression analysis for education level.
Table 21

*Regression Analysis of Education Level to Knowledge and Classroom Practices*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<td>.594</td>
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<tr>
<td>Best Practice (questions 39-56)</td>
<td>-2.657*</td>
<td>.033</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment (questions 57-63)</td>
<td>1.228</td>
<td>.254</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time (question 64)</td>
<td>-.812</td>
<td>.438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunshine State Standards (question 65)</td>
<td>-2.684*</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook (question 66)</td>
<td>-.696</td>
<td>.504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development (question 67)</td>
<td>1.504</td>
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<td>2.249</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Interest (question 69)</td>
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<td>.539</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *indicates significance at the .05 level

In this analysis, education level moderated the relationship between teachers’ knowledge of social studies and their self-reported classroom practices in the following two areas: best practice and the use of the Sunshine State Standards in instructional decision-making. However, both of these were negative; therefore, as education level increased, the relationship between teachers’ knowledge of social studies and their use of best practices and teachers’ knowledge of social studies and their use of the Sunshine State Standards in instructional decision-making decreased. As the education level of the teachers increased, the relationship between their knowledge of social studies and the summated variable of best practices decreased. Furthermore, the professional education attainment among teachers also had an effect on the relationship between teachers’ knowledge and their use of the Sunshine State Standards in instructional decision-making, such that as the education level of the teachers increased, the relationship...
between their knowledge and their use of the Sunshine State Standards in instructional
decision-making decreased.

A regression analysis was also conducted for education level for each subsection of knowledge, American history, America and the World, Political Philosophy and American Government, and The Market Economy. Table 22 shows the results for American History.

Table 22

*Regression Analysis of Education Level to American History and Classroom Practices*

<table>
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<td>.540</td>
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<td>Time (question 64)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunshine State Standards (question 65)</td>
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<td>Textbook (question 66)</td>
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<td>.738</td>
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<td>Professional Development (question 67)</td>
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Note: *indicates significance at the .05 level

In the area of best practice, education level moderated the relationship between American History and self-reported classroom practices. However, this is a negative relationship, so the higher the education level attained, the less relationship there was between American History and the use of best practice strategies.

Table 23 shows the regression analysis for America and the World and self-reported classroom practices. In only one case, the Sunshine State Standards, was the
relationship between America and the World and self-reported classroom practices moderated. Again, this was a negative relationship; therefore, as education level increased, the relationship between the use of the Sunshine State Standards in instructional decision-making and America and the World decreased. Thus, participants with a higher educational attainment appeared to have a decreased relationship between their knowledge of America and the World and their use of the Sunshine State Standards as a factor in instructional decision-making.

Table 23

*Regression Analysis of Education Level to America and The World and Classroom Practices*

<table>
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Note: *indicates significance at the .05 level

In the areas of Political Philosophy and American Government and The Market Economy, there was no significance in the moderation of education level between either of these areas and teachers’ self-reported classroom practices. Tables 24 and 25 present the results of these regression analyses.
Table 24

Regression Analysis of Education Level to Political Philosophy and American Government and Classroom Practices

<table>
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Note: *indicates significance at the .05 level

Table 25

Regression Analysis of Education Level to The Market Economy and Classroom Practices

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<td>Best Practice (questions 39-56)</td>
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Note: *indicates significance at the .05 level
In addition to education level, age was also used to determine if it moderated the relationship between teachers’ knowledge (including the four subsections of knowledge, American History, America and The World, Political Philosophy and American Government, and The Market Economy), and their self-reported classroom practices. No significance was found. In other words, there is no indication that as age increased or decreased there was any change in the relationship between teachers’ knowledge, including the four subsections of knowledge, and their self-reported classroom practices. Tables 26 through 30 show these results.

Table 26

Regression Analysis of Age to Knowledge and Classroom Practices

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Assessment (questions 57-63)</td>
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<td>.626</td>
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Note: *indicates significance at the .05 level
Table 27

*Regression Analysis of Age to American History and Classroom Practices*

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Note: *indicates significance at the .05 level

Table 28

*Regression Analysis of Age to America and The World and Classroom Practices*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Interest (question 69)</td>
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Note: *indicates significance at the .05 level
### Table 29

*Regression Analysis of Age to Political Philosophy and American Government and Classroom Practices*

<table>
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Note: *indicates significance at the .05 level

### Table 30

*Regression Analysis of Age to The Market Economy and Classroom Practices*

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Note: *indicates significance at the .05 level
Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided the results of the quantitative data that were collected through the beliefs and classroom practices survey and the knowledge survey and the qualitative data that were collected from the focus group interviews. These results were used to understand the relationship between fifth-grade teachers’ beliefs and classroom practices, and fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge and their self-reported classroom practices.

The final chapter of this study expands upon these findings to further understand the knowledge, beliefs, and self-reported classroom practices of fifth-grade teachers.
Chapter 5

Conclusion and Implications

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section addresses the nature of surveys and data collection in educational settings, particularly issues that arose in this study. The second section addresses the demographic and contextual data, both quantitative and qualitative. The third section looks at each research question, offering a discussion and conclusions for the analytical findings of the study. The final section of this chapter offers implications for future research in the field of education.

Before taking an in-depth look at the findings for the purposes of offering conclusions and implications, it is necessary to look at the survey responses and interview participants to provide a context for which the data should be interpreted.

In the first stage of data collection, 822 fifth-grade teachers were sent the initial beliefs and classroom practices survey. Of these 822 teachers, 201 completed this survey. The researcher had hoped for a higher return rate than the 24% that was generated. Because of this low return rate, there is obvious concern about the ability to generalize these results across comparable populations. Therefore, it is prudent to look at the possible reasons for this low rate of participation.

There was some indication through emails from teachers that the fact that the end of the school year was approaching might have deterred some teachers from responding to the survey. However, there may be no optimal time of year for survey administration
because teachers are always busy. The survey was sent in mid-April and the school year ended in early June; timing was probably not a primary factor to the low response rate.

Reio (2007) highlights the problem of nonresponse bias in social science research. In many cases, researchers minimally address the issues of nonresponse bias and often attribute issues with their research to low response rates rather than exploring other alternatives.

Rogelberg, Conway, Sederburg, Spitzmüller, Aziz, and Knight (2003) indicate that nonrespondents can either be active or passive. Active nonrespondents specifically state an unwillingness to participate in a survey request while passive nonrespondents just do not respond to a survey request for unknown reasons. Furthermore, while passive nonrespondents may be affected by attempts to gain their participation, through additional reminders, active nonrespondents are not usually affected by these types of reminders (Rogelberg et al., 2003).

During this study, both active and passive nonrespondents were evident. The researcher received approximately 10 emails from teachers asking that the researcher take them off of the email list. The researcher responded to each of these with a statement of compliance to remove their name from future emails along with an added reminder that it would be greatly appreciated if they would reconsider participating in the survey. From these emails there were approximately 2-3 teachers who replied that they would try to complete the survey. The others either did not respond or responded with a simple thank you for taking them off the list.

According to Rogelberg and Luong (1998), the reasons for noncompliance are often a lack of interest or a lower education level of the participant. The researcher
believes that a lack of interest and a lack of time are the primary reasons for noncompliance by teachers. It is assumed that all teachers have at least a Bachelor’s degree; therefore, this is not a salient point toward noncompliance.

Rogelberg and Luong (1998) further suggest strategies researchers can use to detect nonresponse bias. One strategy is to assess the effects of interest level. To do this, the researcher can include particular survey items that examine a respondent’s interest in a particular topic.

In the beliefs and classroom practices survey, there were several questions that particularly addressed the respondent’s interest in the topic of social studies. For example, participants were asked to respond to statements about their enjoyment of watching shows and reading books based on historical events and visiting historical sites. Another statement asked participants to indicate how much they like teaching social studies. These particular questions can easily show whether a participant has a propensity for social studies. However, this is only one way to address nonresponse bias. While most of the respondents may have an interest in social studies, it cannot be assumed that the 621 nonrespondents do not have an interest in social studies.

Another strategy Rogelberg and Luong (1998) suggest is to use a follow-up approach where nonrespondents are surveyed using a shortened version of the original survey. They caution, though, that any changes in methodology will distort comparisons. For this study, a follow-up approach for nonresponders was not feasible. This researcher acknowledges that the participants in this study may consist of those who have a high interest in social studies, and therefore acknowledges a possible bias may exist in this study from nonresponders. However, while the data may not be generalizable to other
groups, it offers valuable information in the study of social studies at the elementary level.

Another area of concern occurred in the second phase of the study, the knowledge survey and focus group interview. In the design of the study, the use of case study schools was added to ensure there would be participation in the second phase of the study. The initial survey included a question that asked teachers if they would be willing to participate in the second phase. It was not expected that there would be a high number of teachers volunteering for the second phase due to the time requirements and the fact that it involved a knowledge survey. By utilizing case study schools, this would ensure at least three focus groups. However, in actuality the initial survey generated a total of 60 teachers who indicated willingness to participate in the second phase of the study. This was much higher than expected and possibly indicates a higher interest in social studies for those teachers who volunteered and an interest in contributing to social studies research.

Furthermore, the willingness of schools to participate as case study schools proved more difficult than expected. The teachers and principals of several schools indicated that they did not have time to participate or they also indicated that they did not teach social studies and thus did not feel they could contribute. Their participation, however, could have been valuable in understanding how data differs for teachers who regularly teach and enjoy social studies and those who do not.

Due to the length of time in receiving approval for the study from the school district, the data collection stage did not begin until April. The school year ended in early June and the approaching of the end of the year appeared to have been a factor in
securing participants for the study. While it was hoped that there would be
approximately 28 participants in the second phase of the study, only 14 participants took
part in this phase. It was necessary to conduct all research prior to the end of the school
year as the roster of fifth-grade teachers would not remain consistent for the next school
year.

Of the A-rated schools, the first school’s principal declined to participate, citing
the time constraints of the end of the school year and not wanting to put anything else on
his teachers. Permission was granted from the principal of the second school on the list;
however, the teachers declined to participate. Permission was received from the third
school, in which there were a total of 8 teachers; however, only 1 teacher ultimately
consented to participate in the study. By this time, it was early May and with the end of
the school year approaching, the researcher decided to proceed with this one teacher
rather than move on to the next school because the response time for principals to grant
permission was averaging approximately 2 weeks.

Of the B-rated schools, permission was granted from both the principal and the 5
fifth-grade teachers of the first school randomly selected. However, several days before
the scheduled interview, the fifth-grade team leader contacted the researcher and
informed her that they would be unable to participate because they did not really teach
social studies and did not feel they could help in this study.

The next school was contacted and with the principal’s permission, 2 of the 4
fifth-grade teachers consented to participate in the study. On the day of the second phase
of the study, however, only one teacher actually participated because the other one said
she did not teach social studies and did not feel she could contribute.
Of the C-rated schools, permission from both the principal and the fifth-grade teachers was granted from the first school contacted and the second phase of the study was conducted with 5 of the 6 fifth-grade teachers. All 6 teachers had indicated they would participate; however, approximately 15 minutes into the arranged session, 1 teacher indicated that he could not stay for the remainder of the session and left before completing the second phase of the study.

For future research, it would be advisable to conduct research in the beginning of the school year, allotting an entire year to gather data. Therefore, more time would be available to continue soliciting case study schools as participants in the event the initial schools chose not to participate.

Before discussing the specific research questions, there are several contextual issues that will be addressed pertaining to fifth-grade teachers and social studies.

*Is Social Studies Being Taught?*

As discussed in Chapter Four, it is likely that the majority of respondents have an interest in social studies, which provided their impetus for completing the survey. Of the 201 fifth-grade teachers who returned the survey, 92% indicated that social studies is a part of their curriculum. This appears to be a positive sign for social studies in the elementary school; however, upon further investigation, it appears that the majority of teachers (63%) are only teaching social studies 1-2 times per week. Many teachers may feel that social studies is a part of their curriculum, because there are curriculum standards in the field of social studies and teachers have social studies resources in their classroom. However, they may not feel that it is a significant part of their curriculum. While teachers from the beliefs and classroom practices survey were only asked to
respond with a written, open-ended response if they marked that they taught social studies other than daily, 1-2 times per week, or 3-4 times per week, 61 teachers filled out this portion of the survey. This may indicate a desire by the teachers to justify their time, or lack of time, spent on teaching social studies. The majority of responses centered on the reasons why teachers did not teach social studies very often or the alternate ways they taught social studies. Of importance is that many teachers stated that they do not teach social studies until the FCAT is over.

The focus group interviewees also seemed to lament the fact that they were not able to teach social studies as much as they may want. It appears that the teachers overall are unhappy about the FCAT and attribute it to a reduction of teaching time for social studies. As McMurrer (2008) indicates, there was a reduction in time spent on teaching social studies Post-NCLB in comparison to subjects such as language arts and mathematics. To fully understand the impact standardized testing has on the reduction of time spent teaching social studies, a comparison study of school systems that utilize standardized testing with those that do not may be helpful.

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between teachers’ self-reported classroom practices and their social studies knowledge and beliefs. Inherent in this is the assumption that teachers are teaching social studies. In cases where this is not occurring, it is necessary to understand why some teachers are not teaching social studies and what needs to be done to promote social studies teaching in the elementary school. Future studies need to look at what is and what is not occurring in elementary social studies, specifically whether social studies is being taught when it is a part of the state curriculum. Policymakers need to be aware of the role social studies has in the
elementary school and the extent to which it is being taught. If teachers are neglecting this topic in the curriculum, the reasons need to be understood so policymakers and administrators can address this neglect.

Of surprise to the researcher was the number of respondents who indicated they do not teach social studies due to departmentalization. The researcher was not aware that there were so many elementary schools using departmentalization, defined as the process of having either teachers or students rotate and specialize for the different subjects. This may be one way to ensure that social studies is taught, if in fact social studies is included as one of the subject areas in the departmentalization model. Some responses may suggest otherwise. For example, one person stated, “My school is departmentalizing in 5th grade. I teach science for 90 minutes. The Reading teacher uses Social Studies curriculum but not on a daily basis.”

Departmentalization in the elementary school appears to be gaining ground (Palm Beach County Schools, 2009); however, there are no recent studies that support this model. In fact, Palm Beach County School District offers no research data to support their decision to move to mandatory departmentalization in all schools, grades 3-5 (Hernandez, 2009; Palm Beach County Schools). Many studies on departmentalization date back many decades (Gerberich & Prall, 1931; Morrison, 1968; Rouse, 1946).

In her doctoral dissertation, Bowser (1984) investigated the academic achievement of fourth and fifth-grade students in science and social studies courses in both self-contained and departmentalized classrooms. Bowser found that fourth-grade self-contained students scored higher in social studies but not in science than students in departmentalized classes. For fifth-graders, there was no difference in their scores in
science or social studies. Furthermore, teachers indicated that the departmentalization model did not meet the emotional needs of the students and that the teacher was the impacting factor rather than the structure of the class (Bowser).

Other teachers indicated that instruction in science and social studies were alternated with each other; however, science was consistently emphasized as taking precedence, most likely due to the fact that science is a tested subject on the FCAT in fifth-grade. One teacher commented, “I rotate between science and social studies, mainly focusing on science before the FCAT.” While this schedule of alternating between science and social studies is often used as a way to incorporate both subjects within a grading period, further study is needed to determine whether this allows for complete coverage of the topic or a deep understanding of the content by students.

Lastly, social studies was often indicated as being a part of the reading curriculum. Some responses were, “Social Studies is integrated within my reading curriculum.” Also, “Social studies activities are incorporated into the reading curriculum as projects.” While incorporating social studies into reading may seem like a beneficial way to include social studies in the curriculum, many times social studies concepts are compromised. Social studies topics may not be taught in depth and students may fail to make connections or develop the foundational knowledge they need for secondary school. Furthermore, students may develop the idea that social studies is not valuable as a subject on its own; rather, it only provides the context for a reading lesson (Burroughs et al., 2005).

Two teachers reiterated that they do teach social studies on a regular basis. One respondent indicated, “Every day we discuss American History and set a purpose to read
three to four pages in our text. In addition, we discuss what is currently happening in our world.” Another teacher stated, “Each day I include 45 minutes of curriculum in social studies.” While it appears that the teachers in this study enjoy teaching social studies, the structural, organizational, and political circumstances described above contribute to teachers’ ability to teach social studies daily.

What Beliefs Do Fifth-Grade Teachers Have About Social Studies?

The majority of responses from the beliefs section of the beliefs and classroom practices survey indicated a proclivity toward social studies. Most respondents (96.2%) agreed or strongly agreed with positive statements regarding social studies.

In further examining the responses to the belief statements, the researcher acknowledges that the particularly high percentages for the majority of the responses may be due to the social desirability to agree with statements where participants may feel it is undesirable to disagree with them. Several statements relating to the importance of social studies teaching deserve more discussion.

When asked if social studies should have less importance than reading or math, 76.3% of participating teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement while 26.4% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. When asked if social studies should have less importance because it is not a tested subject, 84.1% of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that social studies should have less importance because it is not a tested subject, while 15.9% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with this last statement. While it appears that most of the participants feel strongly that social studies should not be neglected, it is also evident that beliefs toward other subjects such as reading and mathematics may still be stronger than social studies for some participants. The fact that
few of the participating teachers agreed with the statement that social studies should have less importance because it is not a tested subject corresponds with comments made by teachers that appear to give the FCAT a negative appeal.

When looking at teachers’ features that are characteristic of beliefs, most teachers seem to encompass at least two of the four features that are characteristic of beliefs according to Nespor (1987). These two features, existential presumption and episodic structure, were apparent in many of the comments made by the teachers. The feature of alternativity would probably be most evident through a combination of discussion and observation of a teacher’s classroom rather than just from a conversation with the teacher. Affective and evaluative loading occur when someone has the knowledge of a topic but does not like the topic. An example of this would be teachers who may have social studies knowledge but do not like social studies or do not like to teach social studies. All fourteen teachers interviewed in this study agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoy teaching social studies; thus, this factor is not evident in their belief systems.

When looking at Nespor’s (1987) four features characteristic of beliefs, it is necessary to remember that social studies is only one component of the teachers’ beliefs systems, so Nespor’s characteristics of beliefs can only be considered with respect to social studies. An in-depth study that investigates teachers’ beliefs across many subjects may further help in understanding the characterization of teachers’ beliefs systems.

What Resources Do Fifth-Grade Teachers Use To Teach Social Studies?

According to the results of the beliefs and classroom practices survey, the participants indicated that they most frequently use the textbook and other print type resources such as newspapers and magazines. The least used resources were primary
source documents and computer software. With the ease of the Internet, it is understandable that computer software programs may not be as widely used as they once were.

Primary source documents, on the other hand, provide a rich source of information that can enhance the understanding of a lesson. It is possible that some teachers do not know how to access primary source documents, nor may they feel they have the time to find the resources and even further, they may feel these resources are sometimes time consuming; for example, an informational visit from a Holocaust survivor would take a lot of planning and would most likely require a longer amount of time than a regular social studies lesson. Through programs such as the Library of Congress’s summer institutes; teachers can learn how to research and use primary source documents in the classroom (Library of Congress, 2009).

Social studies textbooks are often difficult due to a “decontextualized discourse style” (Brown, 2007, p. 1). These textbooks often contain technical vocabulary, challenging syntax, and complex ideas expressed in few sentences (Brown). Furthermore social studies textbooks in Florida span a period of over 500 years and the Sunshine State Standards for social studies in Florida cover a wide breadth of topics. These issues often result in teachers either choosing a few topics to cover in depth or briefly covering a breadth of topics with cursory attention to each topic.

Despite these challenges with textbooks, the teachers in this study indicated that they used the textbook most frequently as the classroom resource. This could be due to the ease of having the textbook available in the classroom; however, several teachers who were interviewed indicated they also use it as a guideline to provide continuity and
sequence for the lessons. This may be the overarching factor in the selection of the
textbook as the most frequently used resource.

Social studies, particularly American history, is typically taught chronologically
(Bohan, 2005). Thus, teachers utilize the textbook to adhere to this chronological
sequence. Due to the reliance on the textbook, teachers must be taught strategies that can
make the textbook more comprehensible and valuable as a teaching tool in the social
studies classroom.

What Is The Role Of Classroom Assessments in Social Studies?

While assessments had no significant correlations with beliefs or knowledge,
analyzing this data allows for further understanding of the role classroom assessments
have in fifth-grade social studies.

The beliefs and classroom practices survey asked the participating teachers to
indicate how frequently they use particular assessments or ways of assessing students in
the social studies classroom. The most frequently used assessment was open-ended
question tests (27.8%) followed closely by multiple-choice tests (24.2%). Both of these
numbers are fairly low, so it is important to understand that assessment in social studies
does not always occur on a weekly basis, thus the reason more participating teachers may
not have indicated that they use these strategies weekly. In looking at the assessments
used sometimes (3-4x per month), these assessments were rated in the same order as
those used frequently (at least 1x per week).

Portfolios were indicated as being used the least (56.5%). This is most likely due
to the time-consuming nature of portfolios. Portfolios not only require collection of work
samples, but also, they require teacher and student conferencing and evaluation (Gelfer &
Teachers may also choose not to assess students through portfolios due to the amount of time it may take for the teacher to learn about portfolios and to begin implementation in their classroom.

Most social studies assessment research addresses standardized testing in social studies (Burroughs, 2002; Passe, 2006; Vogler, 2003) rather than classroom-based testing in social studies. Further study in this area is needed to understand the impact of assessments on student learning.

**What Factors Influence Fifth-Grade Teachers’ Instructional Decisions in Social Studies?**

The last section on the beliefs and classroom practices survey asked participants to select how frequently they made instructional decisions based upon several factors. The two most frequently selected factors were time and the Sunshine State Standards. Both of these are discussed with the research questions.

While there were no significant correlations between beliefs or knowledge and teachers’ professional development, it is interesting to note that professional development was indicated as the factor that the teachers rarely or never use to make instructional decisions. This may be due to the fact that social studies is not emphasized in the elementary school, so there is little professional development offered in social studies. Several participants in the focus group interviews indicated professional development they have participated in as a factor in their instructional decision-making. Unlike the traditional professional development most prevalent in schools today that consist of mandatory, fragmented, and often irrelevant workshops that do not consider teachers’ needs (Wilson & Berne, 1999), these workshops were sought out by the teacher and often took place over the summertime. Furthermore, these teachers in the self-selected focus
group clearly indicated a passion toward social studies and a desire to actively enhance their social studies professional development.

*How Can Knowledge of Social Studies Be Assessed?*

The following discussion provides contextualization for the study and the research questions that follow.

It is necessary to acknowledge that the knowledge survey was only administered to 14 individuals. Therefore, the results are not generalizable to any other population. Furthermore, it is necessary to look at the knowledge survey itself, a little more closely. Designing a study that includes a knowledge survey is often a difficult task. Knowledge tests often separate pedagogy and subject matter and are rarely related to practical application of teaching strategies (Wilson & Wineburg, 1993). This researcher feels that educational research needs to utilize a variety of assessments that assess multiple aspects of teacher knowledge to truly understand what teachers know. Only by understanding this can we design preservice and inservice programs that meet the needs of our teachers, and in turn, our students.

Without being able to assess knowledge, we cannot know the extent to which knowledge may affect teaching. For this reason, the researcher searched to find an appropriate knowledge test. When this study was designed, few knowledge tests were readily available that appeared to fully assess a wide range of social studies topics addressed in the elementary school fifth-grade curriculum. The researcher secured the use of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) Civics Literacy Quiz that appeared to address the majority of topics in fifth-grade social studies. This test was given by ISI in 2006 and
2007 to approximately 14,000 freshman and seniors at 50 universities across the nation (ISI, 2007).

While the findings of ISI’s study cannot be compared to the population in the present study, it is interesting to look at the results of the ISI study. The average score was a disappointing 52.6% for these college students. The following year, ISI sought to find out the civics literacy of the nation so they administered an abridged version of the test to a random sample of 2,508 American adults. The results again were dismal with an average score of 49%. In looking at the scores generated from the 14 participants in the present study, the average score was 53.4%. While slightly higher than the scores of the college students in ISIs study, nevertheless, these scores are still in a failing range, but within the range of the two former administrations of the knowledge test.

Many of the 14 participants in the present study indicated that the test was difficult and that they hadn’t been exposed to much of the content since college. In the researcher’s opinion, the test is difficult and may not be a good measure of social studies knowledge as it appears that few people have actually achieved a passing score on this test. Only two of the participants of the self-selected focus group scored above a 70% and according to ISI, even Harvard seniors only scored an average of 69.6%. While the test is assumed to be a good measure of civics knowledge as it was developed by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI, 2007), this researcher questions its validity since most of those who have been administered the test have failed it. The question persists, should people have more factual knowledge of social studies or should we look at other ways of assessing knowledge that extend beyond factual knowledge?
In subsequent studies, it may be more useful to assess fifth-grade teachers with a test more directly related to the specific subject matter knowledge they teach. This can be difficult, because elementary teachers in Florida are not assessed specifically in social studies content; however, it may be possible to use a test from a teacher study guide such as the 5-9 grade social studies test for Florida certification or perhaps a released test for elementary school social studies from a state that has a social studies standardized test. This researcher also suggests assessing knowledge in other ways than just a factual knowledge test.

The third section of this chapter presents each research question, offering a discussion and conclusions.

*Research Question 1: What is the relationship between fifth-grade teachers’ beliefs about social studies and their self-reported classroom practices?*

The findings from the beliefs and classroom practices survey indicate that there is a relationship between beliefs and classroom practices in the following areas: resources, best practices, time, Sunshine State Standards, and personal interest. While the correlations for each are not extremely high, with $r^2$ ranging from .2 to .5, there is still a more-than-chance relationship between these variables.

In looking at resources, it would appear that a strong affinity for positive beliefs toward social studies and social studies teaching is also indicative of these teachers using a wider variety of resources within their social studies teaching. The textbook and other print documents such as newspapers, magazines for kids, and other visual aids were selected as the resources used most frequently among the teachers in the study. This seems to correspond with a statement on the beliefs survey that asked teachers to indicate
their agreement with the statement: I enjoy reading about social studies/history. Ninety six percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, which may suggest that teachers utilize some of their own preferences toward reading in their classrooms with their students. Furthermore, this may also be linked to the relationship that exists between beliefs and best practices, specifically in the area of reading.

Teachers who have strong positive beliefs toward social studies and social studies teaching report that they employ best practice strategies. If teachers who do not have strong beliefs toward social studies are not employing these strategies, we need to look at how to influence these teachers toward more positive beliefs of social studies. Attempts to change preservice teachers’ beliefs toward social studies may influence their selection of effective strategies once in the classroom.

In a study by Doppen (2007), preservice teacher beliefs were influenced by their participation in a teacher preparation program that utilized historical inquiry and primary source documents in instruction and daily journaling by the preservice teachers. Doppen questions, though, how to ensure these practices persist into the regular classroom. Changing beliefs may be difficult and may be a long-term process; therefore, it may be prudent to look at other ways to influence the use of best practice teaching in the classroom. An in-depth study on how changing preservice teachers’ beliefs affects the strategies utilized in the classroom may help to answer these questions.

The most frequently used best practice reported by participants was having students read in class. This corresponds with the high percentage (96%) of teachers who enjoy reading about social studies. It also corresponds with the most frequently used resources, the textbook and other print resources. Examining how teachers are using this
best practice in the classroom may provide a more direct link to the resources that are used in the classroom.

Another frequently indicated best practice is building upon students’ prior knowledge. In looking at the qualitative data, one of the major complaints was that students do not have much prior knowledge, which seems to contradict this statement; however, it is necessary to remember that only 14 people took part in the second phase of the study; therefore, these data are not generalizable to the rest of the participants in the study.

Three practices that were rarely or never used were enlisting the wider community as a resource, allowing students choice in topics for inquiry, and requiring rote memorization of fact. The absence of using the strategy of enlisting the wider community seems to support the teachers’ lack of using primary source documents as well. If teachers are not using this best practice, it stands to reason that they would also not be using primary source documents that often require enlisting the support of the community. Promoting the strategy of enlisting the wider community and using primary source documents in the classroom may require more than just telling teachers how to go about this. School administrators can provide professional development that allows teachers the time to seek out these opportunities and collaborate with each other on joint projects that utilize primary source documents and other resources in the community. The community itself (local businesses, local universities, and local nonprofit organizations) can also support teachers in conjunction with the school district by providing teachers with information about the resources available in their community.
It is interesting to note that few teachers frequently allow students choice in topics for inquiry. Perhaps teachers feel that social studies is a prescribed curriculum that needs to be taught chronologically; therefore, there is no room for choice in topics by students. Many teachers indicated that there are many more topics in the fifth-grade social studies curriculum than they can possibly cover within the school year. This may also be a reason why they do not allow students to choose the topics they are interested in studying. Lastly, it is possible that teachers may rely on the topics they know in social studies, or use the textbook as their only guide because of their own lack of social studies knowledge.

The practice of requiring rote memorization of fact is not a considered a best practice by Zemelman et al. (1998). Rather Zemelman et al. emphasize the importance of promoting student thinking rather than mere memorization of fact. On the survey, the item that asked how frequently teachers use rote memorization of fact was scored opposite of the other practices in the category. It was scored as high for those who indicated they use this strategy rarely or never, whereas the other strategies were scored as high when a teacher indicated she frequently used the strategy.

While most would agree that using memorization of fact alone is not a positive educational strategy, there is still debate over the extent to which factual memorization should be a part of education, particularly social studies. In many instances, factual memorization provides meaningful connections for students and increases their long-term subject matter knowledge. However, some teachers may rely on rote memorization that does not support meaningful learning due to what Lortie (1975) terms an “apprenticeship of observation.” If teachers rely on similar practices to those that they experienced in
their own schooling, in this case rote memorization of fact with no connection to more meaningful learning, they may in turn utilize these same practices in their teaching. Furthermore, Slekar (1998) suggests that there is a continuum for social studies that ranges from an objective, factual epistemology to an interpretive epistemology that allows for multiple perspectives. Most people do not fall on either end; rather, they fall somewhere between the two. The way a teacher views the epistemology of social studies may impact the classroom strategies and instructional decisions he or she makes.

As Slekar (1998) suggests, most teachers probably fall on a continuum somewhere between an objective epistemology and an interpretive epistemology toward social studies. Most participants in the present study agree that both are necessary for in depth understanding, with many expressing that students should be presented with a factual basis that leads to interpretation, especially as the students proceed through their schooling. The point on the continuum where the teachers fall are probably deeply rooted in their own schooling experiences.

Further study on objective versus interpretive epistemological beliefs of inservice teachers may help in understanding how these beliefs influence practice. In addition, studying the epistemological beliefs of preservice teachers may help in understanding how to change these beliefs which, in turn, may influence teaching strategies.

Evans’s (1989) typologies for categorizing teachers may influence future studies that attempt to understand teachers’ conceptions of history. While Evans’s typologies were used with secondary school teachers, they may also be useful in categorizing elementary social studies teachers.
Primarily, the participants of this study were categorized as some form of storyteller, scientific historian, or relativist/reformer. It would be easy to categorize any of the participating teachers as eclectic, which is generally a combination of any two of these typologies; however, this fails to look deeply at the strategies the teacher is using. The interview data, alone, did not provide an in-depth look at the teachers’ practices; therefore, it is difficult to conclude which categories truly reflect these teachers’ conceptions of history. It would be more prudent to utilize a combination of interviews and observation to more accurately categorize the teachers’ conceptions of history. It is also likely that elementary teachers fit into more categories than secondary teachers might because most elementary teachers teach all subject matter and; therefore, are used to varying their strategies and delivery methods based upon what they are teaching. This may make it difficult to categorize elementary teachers according to these typologies.

While a teacher may choose to use storytelling to teach an event such as the Great Depression, the teacher may also choose to use characteristics of a scientific historian to teach about the Holocaust in order to guide students toward an understanding and interpretation of the Holocaust and to gain knowledge that will help them understand current issues.

To further link research to practice, researchers must not only investigate the best practices that teachers indicate they use, but also, they must investigate the best practices that are infrequently used. It is necessary to understand why teachers use some practices so infrequently so that we may find ways to influence greater use of these practices in the classroom. Furthermore, direct observation is necessary to obtain a true picture of best practices used by teachers.
The last three classroom factors that were correlated to beliefs were individual items that were listed under a section on the beliefs and classroom practices survey that asked teachers to indicate how often they make instructional decisions based upon these factors. Three of the six factors listed had a significant correlation with beliefs.

The first of these factors was “time.” This suggests that teachers who had a stronger affinity toward social studies indicated that they frequently based instructional decisions on “time.”

As “time” was not defined on the survey, it is possible that teachers had different definitions for this item. Based upon the use of the word “time” from the written responses on this survey, as well as the focus group interview data, it is assumed, and was the intent of the researcher, that “time” as a factor usually means that decisions are based upon the amount of time that teachers have to complete their curriculum.

While making instructional decisions based upon “time” may not be a positive factor in decision-making, it nevertheless is a prevalent component of many teachers’ instructional decision-making. In fact, “time” was the highest rated instructional factor, with 73.2% of participating teachers indicating that they frequently base their decision-making on “time.” Teachers are constantly struggling with a time issue, especially in this district where students are only in class for 6 hours a day and instructional time with the classroom teacher usually averages about 5 hours or less per day. Added to this, most schools require a 90-minute to 120-minute block for reading and a 60-minute to 90-minute block of mathematics, which leaves little time for other subjects. With this in mind, it is imperative that scheduling of time become a part of curriculum discussions, especially if this is the most widely attributed factor for instructional decision-making.
While time issues may be associated with all subjects in the elementary curriculum, it is important to determine how teachers make their decisions regarding “time” and whether social studies is the subject primarily impacted based upon the factor of time.

The Sunshine State Standards were the next instructional factor that was correlated to beliefs. In this case, there was a relationship between teachers’ strong affinity toward social studies and how they frequently based instructional decisions on the Sunshine State Standards.

Implemented in 1996, the Sunshine State Standards provide teachers with the curriculum standards for each subject area (Florida Department of Education, 2009). Since these standards are intended to provide the guidelines teachers must follow in their curriculum, it is propitious that the majority of the teachers, 71.2%, frequently (at least 1x per week) base their instructional decisions on them, and 19.2% of teachers sometimes (3-4x per month) make their decisions using the Sunshine State Standards.

Eight teachers (4.0%) indicated that they rarely or never base instructional decisions on the Sunshine State Standards. The fact that there is a relationship between beliefs and the Sunshine State Standards may indicate that a teacher who has an interest in subject matter is inclined to closely follow the state guidelines in making their instructional decisions. It would be advantageous to determine if there is a correlation between beliefs in other subject areas and the Sunshine State Standards.

The last factor correlated to beliefs is personal interest. In this case, it appears that a relationship exists between those teachers with strong positive beliefs in social studies and those who indicated they frequently base instructional decisions on personal interest. Seventy-five teachers (38.1%) indicated that they frequently base instructional decision
on personal interest. This may be somewhat contradictory to the Sunshine State Standards, as they are intended to prevent teachers from making decisions based upon their personal interest. However, most teachers base their instructional decisions on time, so it is understandable that personal interest may also play a part in this as teachers pick and choose the topics they would like to cover.

The Sunshine State Standards and the textbook have often been criticized for being too extensive and having too much to cover. Patty addressed this in her interview, stating, “You know we cover what . . . 300, 400 years. . . .” Lisa also commented, saying, “Usually the textbooks give you way more than you need to teach. . . .”

In this case, personal interest may play a part in helping teachers decide which topics they can fit into their schedule. If teachers are consistently teaching social studies and following the Sunshine State Standards, it may not be a major factor if a teacher chooses to spend a little more time on World War II instead of World War I, emphasizing additional events and details, as long as they are teaching the curriculum as mandated.

In the focus group with self-selected teachers, a discussion ensued about what interests them in social studies. This was informative in understanding how their personal interest plays a part in their instructional decision-making. Robin remarked that she liked the latter part of the social studies textbook, referring to the more recent events in history. “You know half the book is on . . . every Indian civilization and there’s like a paragraph on the Holocaust. I like the latter part of the book. I think it’s more relevant and there’s more they can relate to.” Rob concurred stating, “I like the second half of the book. . . . Starting pretty much from the industrialization of American. . . .” Amy was the only
teacher to indicate that she liked the Colonial period. “I don’t know if I am the only one who likes the Colonial period, but we do a simulation of the Stamp Act Congress. . . .”

Each of these teachers is indicating their personal preference for particular topics in social studies. In most cases personal preferences have a role in instructional decision-making, as most teachers are given the freedom to decide how long they spend on topics or what emphasis they place on certain topics. In some schools, though, primarily those that are not performing at an acceptable rating according to the state, more formally prescribed instruction may be the foundation for the curriculum at the school.

It is admirable that some teachers are very interested in particular topics and choose to emphasize these topics in their classroom. However, if personal preference becomes the basis for instructional decisions about what to teach, replacing the Sunshine State Standards, students may not get a coherent, cohesive curriculum because teachers may choose to include certain topics while completely ignoring other topics. This may provide students with an incomplete foundation for middle school.

One example of personal interest superseding the state standards is evident in an individual interview with Janet. Janet professed her love of the Revolutionary War early in the interview when discussing her experiences as a child. She was raised in Massachusetts and had a lot of firsthand experience with this era of history. She also indicated that she teaches social studies through reading and takes three weeks out of each term to teach social studies. Therefore, she only teaches a few major events, the Revolutionary War, Government, World War I, and World War II. When asked about how she decides what to teach and what not to teach in social studies, she stated that she starts with the Revolutionary War because that’s where the curriculum starts. In fact, the
fifth-grade curriculum starts with explorers and continues with early civilizations and colonization before getting to the Revolutionary War (Florida Department of Education, 1996). Janet stated,

I start with the Revolutionary War because, that’s where our curriculum starts, I believe, or that’s what I was told when I started here. . . . I know I don’t cover everything on the . . . curriculum map for social studies. . . . I guess it’s a little bit of personal preference based on the time period I have, picking those major topics. Our team has decided to cover that. Some people do start with the Explorers but I think that’s a fourth-grade requirement. . . . I think that because when I started teaching here someone told me that that’s what we cover here.

Again, in instances such as this, personal interest, or misconceptions about what the standards are, may actually cause students to leave fifth-grade with gaps in their knowledge. For this reason, it is imperative that further research is conducted on the role personal interest plays in instructional decision-making.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge of social studies and their self-reported classroom practices?

As indicated in Chapter Four, there were no significant correlations between knowledge and self-reported classroom practices. Therefore, it does not appear that, when looking at comprehensive knowledge of social studies, fifth-grade teachers indicated any difference in teaching strategies, resources, or factors that influence their teaching. It is important to remember, as discussed previously, that the knowledge test used in this study may not provide the most effective measure of knowledge. Additional ways of measuring knowledge, beyond this factual-based test, may provide more information
about the relationship between fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge and their self-reported classroom practices.

There were two significant correlations between the subsection of American History and self-reported classroom practices; that of American History and the textbook \((r^2 = .425)\) and American History and professional development \((r^2 = .310)\). The next subsection, Political Philosophy and American Government, showed only one significant correlation between government and professional development \((r^2 = .497)\).

The findings for the last two sections of the knowledge survey indicated that there were no significant correlations between the summated scores for America and the World and self-reported classroom practices or for The Market Economy and self-reported classroom practices.

The fact that there were significant correlations in the areas of American History and government, and none in America and the World and The Market Economy are probably due to the fact that the major focus of the fifth-grade curriculum in the state of Florida is American History, which includes a section on government. While fifth-grade teachers are also responsible for teaching about economics, this is usually taught through the constructs of history and government and not as a topic on its own.

As discussed previously, the textbook was the most frequently selected factor \((62.6\%)\) among resources for participating teachers. This is significant because the textbook primarily consists of information pertaining to American History and government.

Looking at the first significant correlation between American History and the textbook, as teachers’ knowledge of American History increased so did the frequency
with which they used the textbook in making instructional decisions. In the beliefs and classroom practices survey, the textbook was the third highest rated factor (48.5%) that influenced fifth-grade teachers’ instructional decision-making, after time and the Sunshine State Standards. Again, this may go back to the fact that the textbook primarily consists of American History topics. However, it is necessary to consider whether teachers who have more knowledge consult the textbook more often in instructional decision-making or whether teachers who consult the textbook more often in instructional decision-making have more knowledge due to the fact that they are more familiar with the topics in the textbook. To more fully understand this it may be necessary to have discussions with teachers about their knowledge and whether or not the textbook influences their knowledge. Additionally, it is important to further investigate what occurs in the classrooms of teachers who do not appear to have a strong degree of knowledge about social studies.

Although textbooks are often associated with boring content (Chapin, 2006; Owens, 1997; Zhao & Hoge, 2005) and teacher-driven lessons (Bailey et al., 2006; Burroughs et al., 2005), if teachers are using textbooks as a guideline along with other resources they may serve to provide valuable background knowledge for both teachers and students.

The second significant correlation occurred between American History and professional development. Professional development was another factor that was listed on the survey as a factor that may impact instructional decisions made by teachers. In other words, as teachers’ knowledge of American History increased so did the frequency
with which they selected professional development as a factor in their instructional decision-making.

The last correlation occurred between government and professional development. Again, as the teachers’ knowledge of government increased so did the frequency with which they selected professional development as a factor in their instructional decision-making.

Professional development was the factor that had the least number of teachers (22.2%) indicating they frequently based instructional decisions on it. Therefore, it is likely that teachers who have a stronger knowledge of American History and government make more of an effort to seek out professional development, possibly because they are aware of what they do not know and what they want to learn.

Whether these findings suggest that increased knowledge in American History and government may lead to a greater interest in professional development or that a greater interest in professional development leads to increased knowledge in American History and government, it is necessary to target both areas as together they indicate a positive relationship. Those who plan professional development must take into consideration the reasons teachers are attending professional development. It may be prudent to have varying levels of professional development that are able to target the different needs of teachers, for example, those who have low knowledge and low interest, those who have low knowledge and high interest, and those who have high knowledge and high interest.
Although there are some weaknesses in the knowledge portion of this study, rather than giving up and saying knowledge cannot be studied, is it important to investigate a variety of ways in which knowledge can be studied.

In her doctoral dissertation study, Wilson (1988) used a qualitative approach to understand historical knowledge and the role subject matter knowledge had in U.S. history teachers’ instructional decisions. Wilson conducted four semi-structured interviews with ten participants that attempted to gauge their subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge. An interesting component of her study was that she orally assessed what her subjects knew. While some people in education research feel strongly that you cannot or should not test a subject, this may be one area where more research is needed so that we can better understand teacher learning.

Wilson (1988) further acknowledges that it is difficult for someone to face their own ignorance; therefore, they may feel uncomfortable with the process. To lessen this discomfort that might arise, she used her first interview to develop a rapport with the participants before asking them to discuss what they knew about the Great Depression. In the second interview participants were shown topic identification cards and asked to relay all they knew about the topic. The last two interviews were used to assess pedagogy. Wilson’s attempt to study teachers’ knowledge prompted this researcher to pursue an investigation of teacher knowledge at the elementary level, an area which has not been given much attention.

While the findings of the present study, for the most part, do not support a significant correlation between knowledge and self-reported classroom practices, this researcher is encouraged to continue looking at teacher knowledge and work to find ways
to assess this knowledge so that the findings can help us understand how to design preservice teacher programs and inservice professional development.

In another study, Wilson and Wineburg (1988) investigated subject matter knowledge of secondary teachers. In a 2-year study that investigated the subject matter knowledge of high school teachers, they found that the teachers constructed their American history course they taught based upon what they did and did not know, emphasizing their own area of expertise. Wilson and Wineburg suggest that the teachers without the specific historical knowledge were unable to seek out alternative interpretations of history, nor did they know enough to do so. Further, due to this lack of knowledge, they were limited in their ability to learn and comprehend the new subject matter. Teachers who had more historical knowledge were able to acquire new subject matter because they were able to attach it to their already constructed frameworks of knowledge and they were also better able to include alternative points of view in their class discussions (Wilson & Wineburg).

While this study was of high school subject matter specialists, elementary school teachers must also have a strong base of all the subjects they teach. It is not expected they know all aspects of every topic; however, it is necessary that they know enough to guide student discussion, correct students’ misconceptions, and provide students with an accurate foundational knowledge free of erroneous information.

To further understand knowledge, it is necessary to look beyond subject matter knowledge and look toward pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986). As discussed in Chapter Two, many researchers emphasize a combination of the two for effective teaching (Bain & Mirel, 2006; Grossman et al., 2005).
While qualitative data from the focus group interviews were coded to Shulman’s Model of Pedagogical Reasoning and Action (1987), it was difficult to accurately define the participating teachers’ knowledge according to Shulman’s model (see Appendix K). A design that includes interviews, observations, and examination of materials and documents may provide a more comprehensive picture of fifth-grade teachers’ pedagogical reasoning and action. Nevertheless, there may be some valuable information that can be discussed that may prompt future research.

As American History is the major focus of fifth-grade social studies, Shulman’s Model of Pedagogical Reasoning and Action is presented through a focus in this content field. In looking at the first phase, Comprehension, it is necessary to understand that this includes both knowledge of the subject as well as pedagogical knowledge that allow one to teach the subject. From the qualitative data, most teachers indicated that they had little preparation in the way of content courses in social studies. The teachers primarily spoke of methods courses. According to Shulman (1987), teachers need both methods and content, but to truly comprehend a subject, a teacher must know the content, the purposes for teaching the content, and the ways in which to transfer the content to students.

Many preservice education programs focus on methods rather than content; however, many of these pedagogical courses are repetitive (Fritzer & Kumar, 2002). Preservice teachers may feel they need to learn content; however, they must learn the content in the context of how to teach it. Therefore, teachers may be better served by having content embedded throughout their methods courses so they have a better understanding of pedagogical content knowledge, or the linking of content and pedagogy.
Shulman (1986) posits that teachers must not only have subject matter knowledge, but also, they must have the conceptual knowledge inherent to understanding the subject. This conceptual knowledge allows them to deeply understand the content while also understanding the best ways to transfer this knowledge to their students. Furthermore, this requires an understanding of students’ conceptions, and allows teachers to construct experiences for the students that will enhance their understanding of the subject (Shulman).

Unless content and pedagogy are linked in preservice classes, new teachers will not have the understanding of how to transform their subject matter knowledge to others.

The second phase of Shulman’s model is Transformation. Transformation requires teachers to pedagogically understand the content so that they can teach it to students. Teachers must be able to prepare for teaching, determine how to represent the content, select the strategies for teaching, and adapt and tailor their teaching to meet the needs of their students (Shulman). In order to do this, teachers must have a sound comprehension of knowledge. If teachers do not thoroughly understand their subject matter, they may not be able to represent the content through analogies and metaphors, nor are they able to provide students’ with alternative ways to think about the subject. Specifically in elementary school, teachers must also be able to correct students’ misconceptions and offer them a variety of explanations and demonstrations to further their understanding.

The teachers in this study, who appear to be in the Transformation stage, emphasize making connections and tailoring their lessons to meet their students’ needs.
Further study that observes teachers in the classroom may provide a more accurate picture of this stage.

For the next stage, Instruction, Shulman (1987) posits that a teacher who has strong content knowledge has the ability to be flexible and interactive with the subject matter. It is possible that a lack of subject matter knowledge may limit teachers in their ability to elaborate on their teaching practices in social studies. On the other hand, Shulman surmises that, “teachers themselves have difficulty in articulating what they know and how they know it” (p. 6). He further opines that teachers have a wealth of practical knowledge, although they may be unable to define and articulate this knowledge. Determining the practical knowledge teachers have and being able to interpret this knowledge may provide a framework for further understanding teacher knowledge and the impact it has on effective teaching.

While the next stage, Evaluation, is not specifically addressed in the qualitative data, the section on assessment in the beliefs and classroom practices survey offers some information in this area. It appears that the participating teachers are using both traditional assessments such as multiple-choice tests and open-ended question tests, as well as performance-based assessments such as projects and presentations. A thorough understanding of whether or not teachers are including the stage of evaluation in their practice would require classroom observations and a thorough examination of documents and activities used for evaluation purposes. Beyond simply evaluating students, teachers, in the evaluation stage, should also be evaluating their own performance and making adjustments as necessary (Shulman, 1987).
The next two stages, Reflection and New Comprehensions, are not evident through the data collected in this study. These stages are important for fully understanding teachers’ pedagogical reasoning and action. Future research could address these stages if observations and follow-up interviews are included in the design.

Research Question 3: Does teaching experience moderate the relationship between social studies beliefs and self-reported classroom practices?

In only one area, the Sunshine State Standards, did teaching experience, or years spent teaching, moderate the relationship between beliefs and the teachers self-reported classroom practices. In this one case, there was a negative effect of teaching experience on this relationship. Therefore, as years spent teaching increased, the relationship between beliefs and the Sunshine State Standards decreased. Since the Sunshine State Standards have only been in use since 1996 (Florida Department of Education, 2009), teachers with experience beyond the past 13 years may be less likely to make instructional decisions based upon the Sunshine State Standards. Teachers who have been teaching less than 13 years have always had the Sunshine State Standards as part of their curriculum, and thus are more likely to utilize these standards. It is important to note that preservice teachers at the local university in South Florida utilize the Sunshine State Standards within their education programs. Therefore, beginning teachers who have completed this program may put a greater weight on them than someone who began teaching before the implementation of these standards.

Recently, the Sunshine State Standards have been revised and are now named the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (Florida Department of Education, 2009). These documents are gradually being introduced to the school district and are currently
being used at the local university in the elementary education teaching program. The fact that teaching experience moderates the relationship between beliefs and the Sunshine State Standards suggests that perhaps the Sunshine State Standards, or the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards, need to be reviewed with all inservice teachers, providing the teachers with the rationale for using them as well professional development that allows them to work with the documents to gain a better understanding of their purpose.

**Research Question 4: Does teaching experience moderate the relationship between social studies knowledge and self-reported classroom practices?**

Teaching experience was not found to moderate the relationship between social studies knowledge and teachers self-reported classroom practices. Therefore, years spent teaching does not appear to affect this relationship. Each subsection of knowledge, American History, America and the World, Political Philosophy and American Government, and The Market Economy were also analyzed to determine if teaching experience moderated these relationships with teachers self-reported classroom practices. Teaching experience was also not found to moderate these relationships.

It would be helpful to look at what may impact the relationship between knowledge and teachers’ self-reported classroom practices. By further looking at other demographics such as courses taken in teacher education programs, we may be able to better understand where teacher knowledge in social studies comes from and what factors influence it. This may help in determining which classes are effective in providing elementary teachers with the background knowledge in social studies they need for effective teaching.
Research Question 5: Do demographic attributes moderate the relationship between social studies beliefs and self-reported classroom practices?

Demographics, including education level, age, and gender, were analyzed to determine whether they moderated the relationship between teachers’ social studies beliefs and their self-reported classroom practices. Education level did not appear to moderate the relationship between beliefs and self-reported classroom practices. In other words, as education level increased, there was no change in the relationship between beliefs and teachers self-reported classroom practices.

Age was found to moderate the relationship between teachers’ beliefs about social studies and their self-reported classroom practices in the area of the Sunshine State Standards. The relationship is one of a negative effect. Therefore, as the age of teachers increased, their relationship to beliefs and teachers’ self-reported classroom practices, specifically the Sunshine State Standards, decreased. This may once again be due to the fact that the Sunshine State Standards have been operational for 13 years. It is possible that older teachers may benefit from targeted professional development that reviews the Sunshine State Standards and Next Generation Sunshine State Standards to help them include these documents in their planning and teaching. Another possibility is that older or more experienced teachers may feel confident in their teaching ability and may feel that the Sunshine State Standards are simply another mandate in a long list of mandates that are continuously changing.

Gender was also found to moderate the relationship between teachers’ beliefs about social studies and their self-reported classroom practices in two areas, best practice and their use of time as a factor of instructional decision-making. There was a difference
for males and females in the relationship between their beliefs about social studies and their use of best practices in their teaching. Additionally, gender also moderated the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their use of time as a factor of instructional decision-making. There was also a difference for males and females in the relationship between their beliefs about social studies and the instructional decision making factor of time.

To further understand how these variables moderated the relationships between teacher beliefs and classroom practice, correlation analyses were conducted separately for males and females. Before discussing these analyses, it is important to note that 84.4% of the participants were female and 15.6% of the participants were male.

No significant relationship was found for females between their beliefs about social studies and their use of best practice strategies, but there was a significant relationship for males between their beliefs about social studies and their use of best practice strategies. Therefore, for males, as the score for beliefs increased so did the score for best practice. This may indicate that males are more aware of the best practice strategies they are using in the classroom or that they are using best practice strategies in the classroom more frequently. Further studies on this, comparing the use of best practice strategies through observation for males and females, may yield more information.

The second area where gender moderated the relationship occurred between beliefs and time. In this case, time was indicated as a factor that instructional decisions were based on. Again, for females there was no significant correlation between their beliefs about social studies and their use of time in instructional decision-making but for
males there was a significant relationship between their beliefs about social studies and time as an instructional decision-making factor. This may mean that males more frequently make instructional decisions based upon the factor of time. A study that first investigates how males and females report that they use the factor of time in planning followed by an observation study that examines how time impacts their instructional decision-making may assist in better understanding this relationship.

Research Question 6: Do demographic attributes moderate the relationship between social studies knowledge and self-reported classroom practices?

For this last question, education level and age were used to determine if they moderated the relationship between knowledge and self-reported classroom practices. Gender was not used, due to the fact that there were only two males who participated in the knowledge portion of the study.

There were two areas where education level attainment moderated the relationship between knowledge and teachers’ self-reported classroom practices. The two areas were best practice and the Sunshine State Standards. In both of these cases, negative relationships occurred. Therefore, for teachers with a higher education level, as knowledge increased, best practice decreased. Similarly, for teachers with a higher education level, as knowledge increased, the use of the Sunshine State Standards as an instructional factor in decision-making decreased. It seems that those teachers with a higher educational attainment and an increase in knowledge indicate less of a use of best practice strategies and the Sunshine State Standards in their instructional decision-making. It is important to further understand what these teachers base their instructional decision-making on and how their degrees impact their teaching. It is possible these
teachers have degrees in areas other than education so they may have greater subject matter knowledge but less pedagogical knowledge in teaching. Further studies that look at the types of higher education programs these teachers completed and the route they took in becoming a teacher may help in understanding the role educational attainment has in classroom teaching practices.

Further, with respect to the four subsections of the knowledge test, education level was also found to moderate the relationship between American History and best practice. Again, this is a negative relationship, meaning that as education level increased, the relationship between American History knowledge and best practice use decreased. Therefore, teachers with a higher educational attainment had a decreased relationship between their American History knowledge and their use of best practices. This may indicate that teachers with a greater knowledge of American History place more of an emphasis on subject matter knowledge than on effective teaching practices. As Shulman (1986) indicates, it is necessary to have both content and pedagogy, or pedagogical content knowledge. Further studying the relationship between American History knowledge and the use of best practice may help teacher educators find a middle ground in the debate between pedagogy and content that promotes the use of effective teaching practices in the classroom.

Similarly, in the knowledge subsection of America and The World, education level was found to moderate the relationship between knowledge and the Sunshine State Standards. This is a negative relationship, meaning that teachers who achieve higher educational attainment, and have a greater knowledge of America and The World, do not frequently utilize the Sunshine State Standards in their instructional decision making.
Teachers who have achieved higher educational levels may put more of an emphasis on factors within their own control rather than on state-mandated factors such as the Sunshine State Standards. An investigation of the ways teachers with higher educational levels utilize the Sunshine State Standards may yield more data on this topic.

Education level was not found to moderate the relationships between the knowledge subsections of Political Philosophy and American Government and The Market Economy and teachers’ self-reported classroom practices.

In looking at these data, it is important to keep in mind the small sample size for the knowledge survey, 14 total participants. Furthermore, all participants did not complete every question in the beliefs and classroom practices survey; therefore, the sample sizes for the regression analysis were even smaller. For best practice, the sample size was 11 and for the Sunshine State Standards, the sample size was 13.

Regardless of the sample size, there is still a better-than-chance significance that education level affects these two areas. For these samples only two education levels were reported, Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees. It is interesting that teachers with a higher education level, a Master’s degree, actually showed less of a relationship between their knowledge and best practice, meaning that for those participants with a Master’s degree, as their knowledge increased, their use of best practices decreased and their use of the Sunshine State Standards as an instructional decision-making factor decreased. It would often be assumed that teachers who have achieved a higher education level would not only have a greater subject matter knowledge but also would more frequently use best practice teaching in their instructional decision-making.
It is important to look at the degree programs the teachers completed to better understand how their backgrounds influence their teaching. Five of the seven participants who indicated they have a Master’s degree completed a Master’s degree plus certification. These programs often offer little variation beyond what is required for a Bachelor’s degree in elementary certification, so these teachers may not have had any greater exposure or experience with best practice than those with only a Bachelor’s degree in education. It is also important to look at the undergraduate degree programs these teachers completed to understand the nature of their knowledge base.

For this question, age was also used to determine if it moderated the relationship between knowledge and best practice. If so, this could indicate that teachers who have been teaching a long time may be “set in their ways,” utilizing many of the same instructional strategies they have for their entire career. In the area of the Sunshine State Standards, similar reasoning could also provide an understanding for this negative relationship. Teachers with Master’s degrees may be older teachers who have been teaching for a long time and may not accept what they may see as the new way of doing things. However, in looking at the variable of age, it did not moderate the relationship between knowledge, or any of the four subsections of knowledge, American History, America and The World, Political Philosophy and American Government, and The Market Economy. In this study it does not appear that there is any decreased correlation between teachers’ knowledge and their self-reported classroom practices simply due to age.
Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

The findings from this study not only indicate a need for future research in multiple areas, but also, offer implications for practical application in education. This section of the study focuses on the implications and suggestions for future research in three areas, elementary education, teacher education, and the field of social studies.

Elementary Education

This study reinforces existing research that social studies is being neglected in the elementary schools (Burstein et al., 2006; McMurrer, 2008). The FCAT test was often the primary reason cited for the neglect of social studies. This corresponds with a study by Burstein et al. that found that teachers spend most of their day teaching subjects that are tested. In Florida, the subjects that are tested in fifth-grade are reading, mathematics, and science. In several instances, teachers from this study were encouraged to focus only on these subjects. Even teachers who attempted to include social studies in their teaching expressed difficulty finding the time necessary to devote to teaching social studies.

Since it is evident that social studies is not a priority in the elementary schools it is necessary to look for ways to increase the importance and time spent on social studies. The first area that is in need of further research involves departmentalization. With much of the research on departmentalization in the elementary schools coming from the early part of the century, current studies need to be conducted that look at the departmentalization model. Research must be conducted that determines the impact on student achievement of departmentalization over the traditional self-contained classroom model.
Departmentalization in the area of social studies may allow for greater attention to be paid to social studies. However, if departmentalization models are used that do not include a specific course in social studies, this may actually result in an even greater decline in the teaching of social studies. Ultimately, the advantages and disadvantages to the departmentalization model need further research. Whether schools use the departmentalization model or not, policymakers must ensure that school districts are teaching all of the standards and not just the ones that are tested.

Another area of concern that may be contributing to the neglect of social studies is the practice of alternating between social studies and science. According to the data collected in this study, some teachers have indicated they teach 3 weeks of one subject and then 3 weeks of the other subject. In this researcher’s experience in education, this practice has always been discouraged because students are not able to build upon what they have learned when they take long breaks in between learning the concepts in social studies and science, since they have often forgotten what they have learned. Another issue that this researcher has found in her experience is that this practice reduces the number of grades available in each subject due to the shortened amount of time spent on the subject. If teachers only have three or four grades in a subject at the end of the grading period, it is difficult to justify giving certain letter grades because there may not have been enough data to accurately assess the students. This may inflate or deflate a students’ perceived knowledge of the subject.

Furthermore, by utilizing these 3-week long units, the amount of concepts that can be completed in one year is reduced and teachers are left to pick and choose which topics they want to cover. If students are missing essential content knowledge that they are
expected to have for middle school and high school, they may never have the time to regain that knowledge and may have gaps in their content knowledge of social studies. Research is needed that investigates the achievement and growth of students taught with this alternating model as opposed to a traditional model that includes weekly curriculum in science and social studies.

A third issue that directly relates to the social studies classroom involves teaching social studies through the reading curriculum. With increased amounts of time being set aside for mathematics and reading, teachers need to find ways to incorporate social studies into their reading curriculum that do not compromise the social studies topics. Often, when teachers bring social studies into the reading curriculum, random social studies passages or books with a social studies topic are selected without any regard to context or to helping students understand the social studies subject matter beyond addressing the reading skills. A suggestion to avoid this is to bring reading into the social studies curriculum. In this case, the social studies concepts remain the basis for the curriculum, but reading strategies are incorporated to help students understand the content.

As many teachers indicated, the social studies textbooks are often difficult to understand; therefore, teachers need to be able to teach reading strategies to break down the text and help students understand the vocabulary, cause and effect, sequencing, and reference and research skills that are common in social studies texts. Furthermore, as teachers in this study indicated that they most often use the textbook as a resource and many often use it in making instructional decisions, they need to be taught how to use it to their best advantage.
The last two areas to be addressed under implications for elementary education involve professional development and time.

Findings from this study indicate that teachers are primarily using resources such as the textbook while neglecting resources such as primary source documents. While the majority of programs for social studies focus on secondary school teachers, there are programs in existence advocating social studies at the elementary level. Two such programs are the Library of Congress Summer Institutes (Library of Congress, 2009) and the Teaching American History Grant (United States Department of Education, 2009). Teachers need to be informed of these programs and given opportunities to participate in these programs as a way to enhance their knowledge of and understanding of how to use primary resource documents in the classroom.

Also indicated in the findings of the study is a discrepancy among the teachers who are utilizing the Sunshine State Standards. It is important to address how teaching experience influences the relationship between beliefs and the Sunshine State Standards. As the Sunshine State Standards are intended to be the guiding document for curriculum in the state of Florida, it is imperative that policymakers understand how this document is being used by teachers in the classroom. Professional development for teachers that focuses on how to use the Sunshine State Standards in making instructional decisions may be needed. Along with this, further research in the use or lack of use of the Sunshine State Standards may provide additional information pertaining to some of the practices that are being used in elementary social studies education such as the practice of alternating curriculums and incorporating departmentalization models in elementary school.
Another area to be addressed for professional development is best practices. According to the findings of this study, teachers with strong beliefs toward social studies utilize best practice strategies in their social studies teaching. However, we must focus on ensuring that all teachers utilize best practices in social studies teaching, not only those who have an interest in the subject matter. Many of the best practices as indicated by Zemelman et al. (1998) are also best practices for teaching. An emphasis on these best practices for all subject areas along with specific concentration on best practices unique to social studies may help to ensure students are receiving the most effective strategies possible. More in-depth studies that focus on how teachers are using best practices in the classroom will be helpful in understanding the impact these practices have on student achievement as well as teacher learning. Additionally, as the data indicate that there was a greater significance for males between their social studies beliefs and their use of best practice strategies, a comparison study that examines the differences between males and females in regard to beliefs and best practices may provide valuable information.

Teachers must not be left on their own to discover the best resources or the effective practices needed to effectively teach social studies. Districts need to determine the needs of their teachers and create professional development opportunities that target these needs. Additionally, districts need to support additional learning opportunities for teachers in the area of social studies, whether it be outside professional development or simply by allowing teachers time to collaborate and work together to provide effective social studies instruction. Principals must also step into the role of curriculum leader, emphasizing a well-rounded education that moves beyond teaching for testing and engages students in all subjects of the Sunshine State Standards.
The last area for discussion here involves time. Time was indicated as the factor that participating teachers most frequently (73.2%) used in making instructional decisions. In the interview sessions, time was often cited as a challenge to teaching social studies. Teachers indicated that they had a lack of time primarily due to standardized testing and the emphasis on the tested subjects. Some teachers also indicated that the breadth of social studies topics they were expected to cover was expansive and not something they could complete in one school year. This brings us back to the question of whether or not there is enough time in the school day.

As reported earlier, schools in the district are only in session for 6 hours a day. With the emphasis on reading, mathematics, and science, this leaves little time for social studies. On the other hand, several teachers indicated that they were able to teach social studies daily. This warrants further investigation. Are the teachers who are teaching social studies daily leaving something else out of their curriculum to make room for social studies? If not, what practices are these teachers using to teach social studies and how effectively are they teaching social studies? An investigation of those teachers who teach social studies daily may help in answering these questions.

At the school level, principals can help ease the time constraints teachers feel by deemphasizing the focus on the standardized test. Instead of suspending the social studies curriculum to accommodate the subjects of reading, mathematics, and science, principals need to provide support for social studies and emphasize its importance as a contributing subject to a well-rounded curriculum.

Policymakers also need to be aware of the neglect of social studies due to standardized testing. If policymakers include social studies in the state standards for
elementary school but fail to make anyone accountable for its teaching, they are contributing to the decline of social studies for elementary students. Policymakers must communicate the importance of social studies in the elementary school and create accountability for the teaching of social studies. This is not to suggest that policymakers should create a standardized test in social studies. Rather, the system of standardized testing in the state of Florida and the way it is used need to be reevaluated.

Teacher Education

Effective preservice teacher education is instrumental in addressing some of the issues that are currently occurring in schools today. Making a concentrated effort to target some of these issues in teacher education programs before teachers enter the classroom may help to decrease the neglect of social studies in the elementary classroom.

An important finding from this study is that teachers indicated that they did not feel they were well prepared to teach social studies. While most teachers indicated they had a college methods course in how to teach social studies, few had content area courses in social studies. It is often assumed that subject matter courses taken during K-12 schooling are able to provide teachers with the content knowledge they need to teach social studies. However, as we have seen, social studies is often neglected in the schools and students often do not gain the necessary background knowledge they need to develop a comprehensive understanding of social studies. Simply looking at the study done by ISI (2007) indicates that civics literacy in this country is lacking and few steps are being taken to remedy this. As several researchers have discovered (Shulman, 1987; Wilson & Wineburg, 1988), teachers who have greater knowledge of their content are able to be more flexible and interactive with the subject matter. Furthermore, they are able to
address students’ misconceptions and extend students’ thinking by providing them with
alternative representations of the concepts (Wilson & Wineburg).

Addressing the lack of content knowledge by preservice teachers requires an
examination of the preparation preservice teachers currently receive in social studies.
Teacher education programs often require multiple methods courses while giving only
cursory attention to the subject matter teachers are expected to teach. It is assumed that
most teachers will learn the content they need on the job. While it appears that those
teachers with an interest in social studies will seek out the knowledge they need, what
about the teachers who do not have an interest in social studies? If teachers do not have
an interest in social studies and do not take it upon themselves to learn the content
knowledge, a continuous cycle endures that promotes negative attitudes toward social
studies and perpetuates the lack of civics knowledge that persists among Americans
today. Teacher education programs must focus on both the pedagogical and content
knowledge necessary for effective teaching.

Another area that has been addressed in the research (Angell, 1998; Doppen,
2007; Grauer, 1998) is that of changing preservice teachers’ beliefs. The present study
sought to find out what the beliefs were of inservice teachers about social studies and
how their beliefs relate to their self-reported classroom practices. While the majority of
the participants in the present study indicated they have positive beliefs toward social
studies, understanding how beliefs, both positive and negative, influence classroom
practices is essential for teacher educators.

The findings from this study indicate that there are significant correlations
between positive beliefs toward social studies and several areas of classroom practices. It
is essential, then, to understand the beliefs preservice teachers enter their teaching programs with in order to address these beliefs and possibly change negative beliefs toward more positive ones. Teacher educators must also challenge preservice teachers to think about their beliefs and assist them in gaining new comprehensions of their understanding so they are able to change their beliefs. We must also further investigate the types of experiences that are effective in changing negative beliefs and teachers’ perceptions. Many studies have reported positive results in changing teacher beliefs (Tatto & Coupland, 2003); however, additional research is needed to determine whether or not changing preservice teacher beliefs has an impact on teaching practices in the classroom.

Social studies methods courses also need to incorporate content knowledge along with pedagogy. Studies are needed that seek to discover how this integration can occur successfully, thus ensuring teachers have pedagogical content knowledge once they are in the classroom.

*The Field of Social Studies*

Much has been reported in social studies research about the neglect of teaching in the elementary schools and the negative impact standardized testing has on social studies. While additional studies in these areas may provide valuable information, there are several areas in social studies that are still lacking in educational research.

To begin with, studies that focus on the classroom level and what is occurring in the classroom are needed. Study designs that utilize multiple observations along with interviews and document analysis may provide valuable data about social studies and social studies teaching. To further understand teachers’ beliefs about social studies, there
must be opportunities to not only ask teachers what their beliefs are, but also, to observe teachers’ beliefs through their teaching and their interaction with students. Observation studies that investigate what students are learning in social studies and how students perceive social studies may also help in designing effective social studies curriculum.

Another area that needs additional study is teacher knowledge. While there is a multitude of research on teacher knowledge (Munby, Russell, & Martin, 2001), how to describe it, and where it is lacking, there is a lack of research that simply asks what teachers know and how we know they know it. We must discard this idea that teacher knowledge is elusive and cannot be measured. Educational research subsists on measuring student knowledge, yet we do not put the same emphasis on measuring teacher knowledge. Without a true understanding of what teachers know, we cannot begin to provide teachers with the skills they need to be effective teachers. This researcher does not presume to suggest that measuring teacher knowledge is easy or comfortable; however, if we seek to study how knowledge impacts teaching, particularly social studies teaching, we must have an understanding of what teacher knowledge is before we can do this.

Wilson & Berne (1999) address the difficulty inherent in investigating teacher knowledge. “. . . we have an obligation to move beyond documenting what teachers say they know, no matter how difficult the interpersonal aspects of such research may be. How do we know that teachers’ ‘knowledge’ is knowledge?” (p. 202). Fenstermacher (1994) also addresses this issue:

There is much merit in believing that teachers know a great deal and in seeking to learn what they know, but that merit is corrupted and demeaned when it is implied
that this knowledge is not subject to justification or cannot or should not be
justified. The challenge for teacher knowledge research is not simply one of
showing us that teachers think, believe, or have opinions but that they know. And,
even more important, that they know that they know. (p. 51)
In spite of its complexity, we must continue investigating teacher knowledge if we hope
to understand the role it plays in the practice of teaching.

The last area to be addressed concerns advocacy for social studies in the
elementary school. Research in social studies has primarily consisted of studies focusing
on secondary schools. More research is needed that focuses on social studies in the
elementary school. Until substantial research is conducted and practical implications are
applied to elementary social studies classrooms, we will continue to see a neglect of
social studies at the elementary level. It often seems as if social studies is not considered
a real subject and is only used as a “filler” in many elementary classrooms. The most
recent position statement from the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 1988)
titled Social Studies for Early Childhood and Elementary School Children Preparing for
the 21st Century is dated 1988. If NCSS does not attach importance to currency in
elementary school social studies research, it is unlikely others will either. Policymakers,
both at the state level and the federal level, must reevaluate the current emphasis on
standardized testing and the No Child Left Behind Act. In many states, social studies is in
danger of disappearing under the current policies. Together, elementary educators,
teacher educators, policymakers, and researchers must find common ground to discuss
elementary social studies and insist upon giving it its rightful place in the elementary
curriculum.
Conclusion

This study sought to understand fifth-grade teachers’ social studies knowledge and beliefs and their relationship to their self-reported classroom practices. While much of social studies research highlights a lack of interest in the subject, this study emphasized positive beliefs toward social studies and relationships between those beliefs and teachers self-reported classroom practices. Social studies education in the elementary school is diverse; teachers utilize a variety of practices and approach the teaching of social studies in a multitude of ways. Social studies still struggles to maintain its ground in the elementary classroom. A major challenge teachers are presented with is having enough time to teach social studies along with all the other requirements of the elementary curriculum. It is evident that even teachers who have positive beliefs toward social studies struggle with including it in their curriculum.

Knowledge is difficult to assess but only through understanding the role knowledge plays in effective social studies teaching can we truly understand how to prepare teachers to be effective social studies educators. Alternative ways to assess teacher knowledge are essential to understanding what teachers know, how teachers learn, and how their learning translates to their classroom practices.

This study reveals interesting aspects about the relationship between teacher beliefs and self-reported classroom practices and knowledge and self-reported classroom practices that can contribute to designing and promoting both inservice and preservice education that focuses on social studies in the elementary school.

Until social studies is seen as a valuable subject in its own right, the neglect of social studies will continue. Educators and researchers must join together to further the
study of elementary social studies and incorporate the findings in practical ways that benefit the elementary classroom. Our students deserve more than the tenuous curriculum they currently receive.

A generation which ignores history has no past – and no future.

Robert A. Heinlein
Appendix A

Letter to Principals of Case Study Schools

Michele Harcarik
1308 Congressional Way
Deerfield Beach, Florida 33442
mharcari@fau.edu
michele.harcarik@browardschools.com

Date

Dear Principal,

My name is Michele Harcarik and I am a doctoral student at Florida Atlantic University (FAU) in Boca Raton, Florida. I am conducting a study that explores fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices in social studies. This study is being conducted as part of a dissertation study. The results will be used to help inform preservice programs and professional development in the area of social studies.

I am writing to ask if your fifth-grade teachers would be interested in participating as a case study school in my study. Participation will include two phases. The first phase of the study consists of a beliefs’ and classroom practices’ survey which should take approximately 20 minutes. The second phase of the study includes a knowledge survey and focus group interview which should take a total of approximately one and a half to two hours. To thank the teachers for their time, I will provide lunch and will also be providing each teacher a book for their classroom library. If your school chooses to participate in this study, I will ask for your help in facilitating the second phase of the study by allowing me access to a room in your school to conduct the knowledge survey and focus group interview. I would be happy to discuss in a more detailed manner the specifics of this study with either you or your fifth-grade team leader.

You may contact me, Michele Harcarik, at 954-913-3780 or mharcari@fau.edu. In addition, you may contact the committee chair, Dr. Gail Burnaford, at burnafor@fau.edu for any answers to questions you may have about this study.

Sincerely,

Michele Harcarik
Doctoral Student
Florida Atlantic University
Appendix B

Letter to Teachers of Case Study Schools

Dear Fifth-Grade Teachers at (School),

My name is Michele Harcarik and I am a doctoral student at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida. I am also a Broward County teacher and have spent most of my teaching career teaching fifth-grade. The fifth-grade team at your school has agreed to participate in my dissertation study that explores fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices in social studies. The results will be used to help inform preservice programs and professional development in the area of social studies.

This study consists of two phases. The first phase consists of a beliefs’ and classroom practices’ survey. The second phase consists of a knowledge survey and a focus group interview. The beliefs’ and classroom practices’ survey should take approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete. The second phase of the study includes a knowledge survey, which consists of 4 questions about your education and 60 multiple-choice questions in the areas of American history, government, international relations and the market economy. This survey should take approximately 20 – 25 minutes. Upon completion of the knowledge survey, a focus group interview will be conducted that should last approximately 60 minutes. Lunch will be provided and to thank you for your time, you will also be provided with a book for your classroom library. Your responses will be confidential and pseudonyms will be used throughout the study. Your comments will not be revealed to anyone associated with your facility, including the School Board of Broward County. If you would like, you will be sent the results of the survey once it is completed. You can request this by checking a box on the survey instrument.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study, but your participation and responses will be extremely valuable. You are free to drop out of the study at anytime. Submitting the surveys act as your consent to participate.

If you have any questions, you may contact me, Michele Harcarik, at 954-913-3780 or mharcar@fau.edu, or the committee chair for this study, Dr. Gail Burnaford, at burnaford@fau.edu for any answers to questions you may have about this study. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or if problems arise, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 561-297-0777.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Michele Harcarik
Doctoral Student
Florida Atlantic University
Appendix C

Letter to Fifth-Grade Teachers

Date

Dear Fifth-Grade Teachers,

My name is Michele Harcarik and I am a doctoral student at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida. I am also a Broward County teacher and have spent most of my teaching career teaching fifth-grade. I am writing to ask for your help. In a few days, you will receive an email inviting you to complete a Web-based survey that explores fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices in social studies. You have been selected because you are a fifth-grade teacher. This study is being conducted as part of a dissertation study. The results will be used to help inform preservice programs and professional development in the area of social studies.

This study consists of two phases. The first phase consists of a beliefs and classroom practices survey. The second phase consists of a knowledge survey and a focus group interview. The beliefs and classroom practices survey should take approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete. You are under no obligation to participate; however, your feedback would be extremely helpful. Your responses will be confidential and pseudonyms will be used throughout the study. Your comments will not be revealed to anyone associated with your facility, including the School Board of Broward County. At the end of the first survey, you will be asked if you are interested in participating in the second phase of the study, a knowledge survey and a focus group interview. This phase of the study should take approximately 2 hours to complete. Those participants who complete the second phase of the study will be provided lunch and will also be provided with a book for your classroom library. If you would like, you will be sent the results of the survey once it is completed. You can request this by checking a box on the survey instrument.

Again, you are under no obligation to complete these surveys, but your responses will be extremely valuable. You are free to drop out of the survey at anytime. Submitting the survey acts as your consent to participate.

If you have any questions, you may contact me, Michele Harcarik, at 954-913-3780 or mharcarik@fau.edu, or the committee chair for this study, Dr. Gail Burnaford, at burnafor@fau.edu for any answers to questions you may have about this study. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or if problems arise, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 561-297-0777.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Michele Harcarik
Doctoral Student
Florida Atlantic University
Appendix D

Email Correspondence to Fifth-Grade Teachers

Subject Line – Request from Michele Harcarik, doctoral student, Florida Atlantic University

Dear Fifth-Grade Teachers,

I am writing to ask for your help. I am inviting you to complete a Web-based survey that explores fifth-grade teachers’ beliefs and classroom practices relating to social studies. You have been selected because you are a fifth-grade teacher. This survey is being conducted as part of a dissertation study. The results will be used to help inform research in the area of social studies.

The survey will be available to you from ________________. All you have to do is click on the link below or copy and paste the link into your browser. The survey should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

www.

At the completion of the survey, you will be asked if you are willing to participate in a knowledge survey and a focus group interview. This part of the study should take approximately two hours and will take place at ___________. The exact time and day will be emailed to you. Teachers who participate will be provided with lunch and several resources to assist you as you teach social studies.

If you would like, you will be sent the results of the survey once it is completed. You can request this by checking a box on the survey instrument.

Again, you are under no obligation to complete these surveys, but your responses will be extremely valuable. You are free to drop out of the study at any time. Submitting the survey acts as your consent to participate.

If you have any questions, or have difficulty accessing the questionnaire, please contact me, Michele Harcarik, at 954-913-3780 or mharcar@fau.edu.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Michele Harcarik
Doctoral Student
Florida Atlantic University
Subject Line – Request from Michele Harcarik, doctoral student, Florida Atlantic University

Dear Fifth-Grade Teacher,

A few days ago an email containing a web-based survey seeking information about your beliefs and classroom practices relating to social studies was sent to you.

If you have already completed and submitted this survey, please accept my sincere thanks. If you have not had the opportunity to complete this survey yet, I am asking for your help in doing so as soon as possible. I am hoping for 100% participation and am especially grateful for your time and participation in helping me understand the beliefs and practices of fifth-grade teachers concerning social studies.

In case you did not get the survey or have misplaced it, I am enclosing the link to the survey. Please click on the link below to access it or cut and paste it into your browser.

www.

If you have any questions, please contact me, Michele Harcarik at 954-913-3780 or by email at mharcarik@fau.edu.

I sincerely appreciate your help as I conduct this study for my dissertation.

Thank you,

Michele Harcarik
Doctoral Student
Florida Atlantic University
Appendix D (continued)

Email Correspondence to Fifth-Grade Teachers

Subject Line – Request from Michele Harcarik, doctoral student, Florida Atlantic University

Dear Fifth-Grade Teacher,

Last week you received an email containing a web-based survey seeking information about your beliefs and classroom practices relating to social studies.

If you have already completed and submitted this survey, please accept my sincere thanks! If you have not had the opportunity to complete this survey yet, I am asking for your help in doing so as soon as possible. I am hoping for 100% participation and am especially grateful for your time and participation in helping me understand the beliefs and practices of fifth-grade teachers concerning social studies.

In case you did not get the survey or have misplaced it, I am enclosing the link to the survey. Please click on the link below to access it or cut and paste it into your browser.

www.

If you have any questions, please contact me, Michele Harcarik at 954-913-3780 or by email at mharcar@fau.edu.

I sincerely appreciate your help as I conduct this study for my dissertation.

Thank you,

Michele Harcarik
Doctoral Student
Florida Atlantic University
Appendix E

Code: ____________

Survey of Fifth-Grade Teachers’ Social Studies Beliefs and Classroom Practices

Directions: This survey is part of a dissertation study by a 5th grade teacher focusing on the beliefs and classroom practices of fifth-grade teachers about social studies. This survey consists of four parts. Part I asks you to provide some personal information about yourself. Part II asks you to provide information about your profession. Parts III asks you to respond to belief statements about social studies in the elementary grades. Part IV asks you to respond to questions about your classroom practices. Please answer each statement honestly. All responses are confidential. Individual surveys will only be viewed by the researcher and will be coded for confidentiality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part I: Personal Information</th>
<th>Part II: Professional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender:</td>
<td>5. Elementary K-5 Teaching Experience:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Male ___ Female</td>
<td>___ First year ___ 2-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>___ 6-10 years ___ 11-15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Age:</td>
<td>___ 16-20 years ___ over 20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ 21-30 ___ 31-40 ___ 41-50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ 51-60 ___ over 60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Education Level:</td>
<td>6. Years teaching 5th grade: ______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Bachelors ___ Master’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Specialist ___ Doctorate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ethnicity:</td>
<td>7. Is social studies currently a part of your curriculum?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Caucasian ___ African American</td>
<td>___ Y ___ N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ Hispanic ___ Asian American</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ American Indian ___ Other</td>
<td>8. Please indicate how often you teach social studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>___ Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>___ 3-4 times per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>___ 1-2 times per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>___ Other, please explain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Part III: Belief Statements
Please rate the following statements based upon your beliefs. There are no right or wrong answers, only honest ones!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. It is important to have an understanding of past historical events.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. It is important to have an understanding of current events in social studies.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Social studies is important in helping us understand others’ perspectives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Knowing about social studies is important to me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Different perspectives on history are essential to a healthy democratic society.</td>
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<td>15. I enjoy watching documentaries about events in history.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. I enjoy watching movies/TV shows based on historical events.</td>
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<td>17. I enjoy visiting historical sites when I travel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Social studies is important because it teaches children how to live in a democracy.</td>
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<td>19. Social studies is an essential part of the elementary curriculum.</td>
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<td>20. More time is needed for social studies in the elementary grades.</td>
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<td>21. Social studies should have less importance than reading and math.</td>
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<td>22. Social studies should have less importance because it is not a tested subject.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. Without teaching social studies, the preservation of our democratic society could be endangered.</td>
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<td>24. Social studies is important in helping students become good citizens.</td>
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<td>25. I enjoy teaching social studies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. Children should question social studies for alternate interpretations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Students should be provided with a global perspective of social studies that views the world and its people with understanding and concern.</td>
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<td>28. Students should be taught to think critically and make value-based decisions about social issues.</td>
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<td>29. Teachers should present other sources that may contradict what is found in social studies textbooks.</td>
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Appendix E (continued)

Part IV: Classroom Practices
Please indicate how often you use these classroom resources when you teach social studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Frequently (at least 1x per week)</th>
<th>Sometimes (3-4x per month)</th>
<th>Occasionally (1-2x per month)</th>
<th>Rarely/ Never (0-1 x per year)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30. Textbooks</td>
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<td>31. Newspapers</td>
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<td>32. Magazines/Newspapers for kids (Time, SS Weekly, etc.)</td>
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<td>33. Historical Fiction</td>
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<td>34. Primary Source Documents (firsthand accounts – letters, documents, etc.)</td>
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<td>35. Visual Aids (posters, graphs, charts, speakers)</td>
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<td>36. Videos</td>
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<td>37. Websites</td>
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<td>38. Computer software</td>
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Please indicate how often you use these classroom practices when you teach social studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Frequently (at least 1x per week)</th>
<th>Sometimes (3-4x per month)</th>
<th>Occasionally (1-2x per month)</th>
<th>Rarely/ Never (0-1 x per year)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39. In-depth coverage of topics</td>
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<td>40. Allowing students choice in topics for inquiry</td>
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<td>41. Exploratory, open-ended questioning</td>
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<td>42. Inviting discussion that challenges students’ thinking</td>
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<td>43. Active involvement by students</td>
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<td>44. Enlisting the wider community as a resource</td>
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<td>45. Cooperative Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>46. Students reading in class</td>
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<td>47. Students writing in class</td>
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<td>Frequently (at least 1x per week)</td>
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<tr>
<td>48. Students debating in class</td>
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<td>49. Building upon students’ prior knowledge</td>
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<td>50. Exploring students’ own backgrounds and cultures in the classroom</td>
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<td>51. Exploring students’ understanding of other cultures</td>
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<td>52. Exploring other cultures’ approaches to social studies concepts</td>
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<td>53. Using mixed ability grouping</td>
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<td>54. Using reflective dialogue between teacher and student</td>
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<td>55. Use meaningful evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>56. Requiring rote memorization of facts</td>
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Please indicate how often you use the following to assess your students in social studies.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequently (at least 1x per week)</th>
<th>Sometimes (3-4x per month)</th>
<th>Occasionally (1-2x per month)</th>
<th>Rarely/ Never (0-1 x per year)</th>
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<tr>
<td>57. Multiple-choice test</td>
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<td>58. True/False test</td>
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<td>59. Open-ended question test</td>
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<td>60. Essay question test</td>
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<td>61. Presentations</td>
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<td>62. Portfolios</td>
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<td>63. Projects</td>
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Appendix E (continued)

Please indicate how often you make instructional decisions based on the following factors:

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequently (at least 1x per week)</th>
<th>Sometimes (3-4x per month)</th>
<th>Occasionally (1-2x per month)</th>
<th>Rarely/ Never (0-1 x per year)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>64. Time</td>
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<td>65. Sunshine State Standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>66. Textbook</td>
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<td>67. Professional development you have participated in</td>
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<td>68. Administrative mandates</td>
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<td>69. Personal interest</td>
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</table>

70. Would you be willing to participate in the second phase of this study which consists of a knowledge survey and a focus group interview?  _____ Yes  _____ No

71. Would you like to receive the results of this survey?  _____ Yes  _____ No

Thank you for participating in this survey.


Appendix F

Code: ____________

Survey of Fifth-Grade Teachers’ Social Studies Knowledge

Directions: This survey is part of a dissertation study by a 5th grade teacher focusing on the knowledge of current fifth-grade teachers about social studies. This survey consists of two parts. Part I asks you to provide some information about your education. Part II asks you to respond to multiple choice questions about social studies. Please answer each statement to the best of your ability. All responses are confidential. Individual surveys will only be viewed by the researcher and will be coded for security.

Part I: Education Information

1. What is the total number of courses you took in high school related to the following areas:
   - history
   - geography
   - political science/government
   - economics

2. What is the total number of courses you took in college related to the following areas:
   - history
   - geography
   - political science/government
   - economics

3. Which of the following teacher education programs did you complete? Check all that apply.
   - Traditional undergraduate elementary education program
   - Elementary education certification program only
   - Master’s degree plus elementary education certification
   - Alternative certification program
   - I did not complete an education program
   - Other, please explain

4. In your teacher education program, how many courses did you take related to social studies? _____

Part II: Knowledge Survey

Please turn to the next page to complete a 60-item multiple choice knowledge survey covering the following four areas: American History, Political Philosophy and American Government, America and the World, and The Market Economy. Please answer each question to the best of your ability by circling the correct statement.
Civic Literacy Survey Instrument
Survey of Civic Knowledge
American History

1. Jamestown, Virginia, was first settled by Europeans during which period?
   a) 1301 – 1400
   b) 1401 – 1500
   c) 1501 – 1600
   d) 1601 – 1700
   e) 1701 – 1800

2. The Puritans:
   a) opposed all wars on moral grounds.
   b) stressed the sinfulness of all humanity.
   c) believed in complete religious freedom.
   d) colonized Utah under the leadership of Brigham Young.
   e) were Catholic missionaries escaping religious persecution.

3. The Constitution of the United States established what form of government?
   a) direct democracy.
   b) populism.
   c) indirect democracy.
   d) oligarchy.
   e) aristocracy.

4. George Washington’s role in America’s founding is best characterized as:
   a) prudent general and statesman.
   b) influential writer on constitutional principles.
   c) leader of the Massachusetts delegation to the Constitutional congress.
   d) strong advocate for states rights.
   e) social compact theorist.
Appendix F (continued)

5. Which battle brought the American Revolution to an end?
   a) Saratoga.
   b) Gettysburg.
   c) The Alamo.
   d) Yorktown.
   e) New Orleans.

6. Which of the following are the inalienable rights referred to in the *Declaration of Independence*?
   a) life, liberty, and property.
   b) honor, liberty, and peace.
   c) liberty, health, and community.
   d) life, respect, and equal protection.
   e) life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

7. Which of the following are in correct chronological order?
   a) The Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation.
   b) Fort Sumter, Gettysburg, Appomattox.
   c) Cuban Missile Crisis, Sputnik, Bay of Pigs.
   d) Mexican-American War, Louisiana Purchase, Spanish-American War.
   e) Prohibition, Boston Tea Party, Reconstruction.

8. The phrase that in America there should be a “wall of separation” between church and state appears in:
   a) George Washington’s Farewell Address.
   b) The Mayflower Compact.
   c) the Constitution.
   d) the Declaration of Independence.
   e) Thomas Jefferson’s letters.

9. The War of 1812:
   a) was a decisive victory for the United States over Spain.
   b) was a stalemate.
   c) established America as the leading power in the world.
   d) enhanced Robert E. Lee’s reputation as America’s most talented general.
   e) was confined only to sea battles.

10. The dominant theme in the Lincoln-Douglas debates was:
     a) treatment of Native Americans.
     b) westward expansion.
     c) whether Illinois should become a state.
     d) prohibition.
     e) slavery and its expansion.
Appendix F (continued)

11. Abraham Lincoln was elected President during which period?
   a) 1800 – 1825  
   b) 1826 – 1850  
   c) 1851 – 1875  
   d) 1876 – 1900  
   e) 1901 - 1925

12. In 1933 Franklin Delano Roosevelt proposed a series of government programs that became known as:
   a) The Great Society.  
   b) The Square Deal.  
   c) The New Deal.  
   d) The New Frontier.  
   e) Supply-side economics.

13. The struggle between President Andrew Johnson and the Radical Republicans was mainly over
   a) United States alliances with European nations.  
   b) The nature and control of Reconstruction.  
   c) The purchase of Alaska.  
   d) Whether or not to have a tariff.  
   e) Whether slavery should be allowed in the Federal Territories.

14. During which period was the American Constitution amended to guarantee women the right to vote?
   a) 1850 – 1875  
   b) 1876 – 1900  
   c) 1901 – 1925  
   d) 1926 – 1950  
   e) 1951 - 1975

15. Which of the following statements is true about abortion?
   a) It was legal in most states in the 1960s.  
   b) The Supreme Court struck down most legal restrictions on it in Roe v. Wade.  
   c) The Supreme Court ruled in Plessy v. Ferguson that underage women must notify their parents of an impending abortion.  
   d) The National Organization for Women has lobbied for legal restrictions on it.  
   e) It is currently legal only in cases of rape or incest, or to protect the life of the mother.

16. The end of legal racial segregation in United States schools was most directly the result of:
   a) the Civil War.  
   b) the Declaration of Independence.  
   c) the affirmative action policies of the 1980s.  
   d) Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka.  
   e) Miranda v. the State of Arizona.
Appendix F (continued)

17. The Manhattan Project developed:
   a) urban enterprise zones.
   b) equipment to decipher enemy codes.
   c) fighter planes.
   d) the Apollo lunar module.
   e) the atomic bomb.

Political Philosophy and American Government

18. The line “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal . . .” is from:
   a) *The Federalist.*
   b) the Preamble to the Constitution.
   c) *The Communist Manifesto.*
   d) The Declaration of Independence.
   e) An inscription on the Statue of Liberty.

19. In *The Republic*, Plato points to the desirability of:
   a) tyranny.
   b) democracy.
   c) philosopher kings.
   d) commercial republics.
   e) world government.

20. A “representative democracy” is a form of government in which:
   a) all or most citizens govern directly.
   b) a monarch is elected to represent a people.
   c) citizens exhibit wide ethnic and cultural diversity.
   d) a president’s cabinet is popularly elected.
   e) those elected by the people govern on their behalf.

21. *The Federalist* (or *The Federalist Papers*) was written to:
   a) support ratification of the U.S. Constitution.
   b) oppose ratification of the U.S. Constitution.
   c) support America’s independence from Britain.
   d) oppose America’s independence from Britain.
   e) support the Missouri Compromise.

22. The principle of the “separation of powers” suggests that:
   a) legislative, executive, and judicial powers should be dispersed.
   b) government becomes more efficient with division of labor.
   c) there should always be at least two global superpowers.
   d) no single political party should dominate any legislature.
   e) courts should formulate policy during periods of Congressional gridlock.
Appendix F *(continued)*

23. The power of judicial review was established in:
   a) the Constitution.
   b) *Marbury v. Madison.*
   c) *McCulloch v. Maryland.*
   d) the Bill of Rights.
   e) a Presidential executive order.

24. What is federalism?
   a) A political party at the time of the Founding.
   b) A set of essays defending the Constitution.
   c) A political system where the national government has ultimate power.
   d) A political system where state and national governments share power.
   e) The belief that America should be unified with a trans-continental railroad.

25. The common law:
   a) was ruled unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court.
   b) is based upon past custom and emerging case law.
   c) was the fundamental law for the Nazis and the Soviets.
   d) is a new form of jurisprudence being tested in Louisiana.
   e) consists of only those statutes approved by popular referendum.

26. The Declaration of Independence relies most obviously on the political thought of:
   a) Plato.
   b) Niccolo Machiavelli.
   c) David Hume.
   d) John Locke.
   e) Georg Hegel.

27. Which statement is a common argument against the claim that “man cannot know things”?
   a) Professors teach opinion not knowledge.
   b) Appellate judges do not comprehend social justice.
   c) Consensus belief in a democracy always contains error.
   d) Man trusts his ability to know in order to reject his ability to know.
   e) Social scientists cannot objectively rank cultures.

28. In his “I Have a Dream” speech, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.:
   a) argued for the abolition of slavery.
   b) advocated black separatism.
   c) morally defended affirmative action.
   d) expressed his hopes for racial justice and brotherhood.
   e) proposed that several of America’s founding ideas were discriminatory.
29. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas would concur that:
   a) all moral and political truth is relative to one’s time and place.
   b) moral ideas are best explained as material accidents or byproducts of evolution
   c) values originating in one’s conscience cannot be judged by others.
   d) Christianity is the only true religion and should rule the state.
   e) certain permanent moral and political truths are accessible to human reason.

30. The Bill of Rights explicitly prohibits:
   a) prayer in public school.
   b) discrimination based on race, sex, or religion.
   c) the ownership of guns by private individuals.
   d) establishing an official religion for the United States.
   e) the President from vetoing a line item in a spending bill.

31. Which author’s view of society is presented correctly?
   a) Edmund Burke argued that society consists of a union of past, present, and future generations.
   b) Adam Smith argued that the division of labor decreases the wealth of nations.
   c) Alexis de Tocqueville argued that voluntary associations are usually dangerous to society.
   d) Max Weber argued that the Jewish work ethic is central to American capitalism.
   e) John Locke defended the divine right of kings.

32. In 1776, Thomas Paine argued for colonial independence from Britain in:
   a) The Declaration of Independence.
   b) Common Sense.
   c) Novanglus.
   d) A View of the Controversy between Great Britain and Her Colonies.
   e) Letter from Birmingham Jail.

33. Which of the following is NOT among the official powers of Congress?
   a) to declare war.
   b) to regulate commerce with foreign nations.
   c) to receive ambassadors.
   d) to create courts lower than the Supreme Court.
   e) to approve treaties with foreign nations.

34. The warning to the American people to avoid entangling alliances and involvement in Europe’s wars is found in:
   a) President Eisenhower’s Farewell Address.
   b) President Washington’s Farewell Address.
   c) Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points.
Appendix F (continued)

35. The Monroe Doctrine:
   a) discouraged new colonies in the Western hemisphere.
   b) proclaimed America’s “Manifest Destiny.”
   c) was the earliest recorded agreement between the United States and France.
   d) was America’s response to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag Archipelago*.
   e) resolved border disputes among the thirteen colonies.

36. According to just-war theory, a just war requires which of the following?
   a) approval by the International Court of Justice.
   b) endorsement by democratic vote.
   c) a threatening shift in the balance of powers.
   d) the authority of a legitimate sovereign.
   e) that no civilian casualties occur.

37. Which of the following was an alliance to resist Soviet expansion:
   a) United Nations.
   b) League of Nations.
   c) North Atlantic Treaty Organization.
   d) Warsaw Pact.
   e) Asian Tigers.

38. What kind of government is a *junta*?
   a) military.
   b) religious.
   c) populist.
   d) social democratic.
   e) parliamentarian.

39. The question of why democracy leads to well-ordered government in America when disorder prevails in Europe is central to:
   a) Thomas Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia*.
   b) Walt Whitman’s *Democratic Vistas*.
   c) John Adams’s “Thoughts on Government.”
   d) Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*.
   e) Charles Beard’s *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*.

40. The United Nations was organized in:
   a) 1953 to combat the power of American corporations.
   b) 1945 to promote “international organization.”
   c) 1937 to deter the spread of Nazism.
   d) 1968 to pursue nuclear disarmament.
   e) 1961 to curtail global warming.
41. The major powers at odds with each other in the “Cold War” were the United States and:
   a) Germany.
   b) Iran.
   c) Vietnam.
   d) the Soviet Union.
   a) Poland.

42. How did President Kennedy respond to the Cuban Missile Crisis?
   a) He imposed a naval blockade on Cuba.
   b) He landed Cuban exiles at the Bay of Pigs.
   c) He sent troops to Cuba to destroy nuclear weapons.
   d) He went to Havana to meet with Fidel Castro.
   e) He ended all diplomatic communications with the Soviets.

43. “Balance of power” refers to:
   a) A state that seeks to expand its power generates resistance by other states.
   b) States that are militarily powerful tend to acquire strong allies.
   c) Weaker states tend to “join the winner” in most international conflicts.
   d) Land and sea powers have tended to balance one another.
   e) Terrorists conceal their demands and affiliations.

44. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (1964) was significant because it
   a) ended the war in Korea.
   b) gave President Johnson the authority to expand the scope of the Vietnam War.
   c) was an attempt to take foreign policy power away from the President.
   d) allowed China to become a member of the United Nations.
   e) allowed for oil exploration in Southeast Asia.

45. Which wall was President Reagan referring to when he said, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall”?
   a) Kremlin Wall.
   b) Wailing Wall.
   c) Hadrian’s Wall.
   d) Great Wall of China.
   e) Berlin Wall.

46. Among which of these groups would Saddam Hussein have found his most reliable supporters?
   a) Islamic Brotherhood.
   b) Baath Party.
   c) Communist Party.
   d) Hamas.
   e) Israelis.
Appendix F (continued)

47. The stated United States objective of the 1991 Persian Gulf War was to:
   a) block Soviet expansion in the Middle East.
   b) defend Israel.
   c) overthrow the Iraqi government.
   d) expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait.
   e) recover control of the Suez Canal.

The Market Economy

48. Inflation:
   a) results from an over-abundance of goods and services.
   b) has not been a problem since the Great Depression.
   c) reduces money’s purchasing power even when some prices decrease.
   d) is monitored daily by the Dow Jones Industrial Average.
   e) remains beyond the influence of central banks due to oil price fluctuations.

49. Free enterprise or capitalism exists insofar as:
   a) experts managing the nation’s commerce are appointed by elected officials.
   b) individual citizens create, exchange, and control goods and resources.
   c) charity, philanthropy, and volunteering decrease.
   d) demand and supply are decided through majority vote.
   e) Government implements policies that favor businesses over consumers.

50. Free markets typically secure more economic prosperity than government’s centralized planning because:
   a) the price system utilizes more local knowledge of means and ends.
   b) markets rely upon coercion, whereas government relies upon voluntary compliance with the law.
   c) more tax revenue can be generated from free enterprise.
   d) property rights and contracts are best enforced by the market system.
   e) government planners are too cautious in spending taxpayers’ money.

51. Which of the following is the best measure of production or output of an economy?
   a) Gross Domestic Product.
   b) Consumer Price Index.
   c) Unemployment Rate.
   d) Prime Rate.
   e) Exchange Rate.

52. Business profit is:
   a) cost minus revenue.
   b) assets minus liabilities.
   c) revenue minus expenses.
   d) selling price of a stock minus its purchase price.
   e) earnings minus assets.
Appendix F (continued)

53. National defense is considered a public good because:
   a) A majority of citizens value it.
   b) A resident can benefit from it without directly paying for it.
   c) Military contracts increase employment opportunities.
   d) A majority of citizens support the military during war.
   e) Airport security personnel are members of the Federal civil service.

54. Keynesian economists conclude that the recession phase of a business cycle:
   a) involves a lower unemployment rate.
   b) occurs when investment spending crowds out consumer spending.
   c) can be eliminated by government taxing more than it spends.
   d) can be reversed by government spending more than it taxes.
   e) can be reversed with higher interest rates.

55. Over the past forty years, real income among American households has:
   a) remained the same when averaged over all households.
   b) involved the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer.
   c) involved the poor getting richer and the rich getting poorer.
   d) decreased for the middle class and increased for the upper class.
   e) increased for the lower and middle classes and increased most for the upper class.

56. Why are businesses in two different countries most likely to trade with each other?
   a) They know that although one business will be hurt from trading, the other will be better off, and they both hope to be the winner.
   b) Businesses are unable to sell their products in their own countries.
   c) Each business expects to be better off as a result of the trade.
   d) Their respective governments require them to do so.
   e) The natural resources of both countries are similar.

57. The price of movie tickets has increased. According to the law of demand, what is likely to be the result?
   a) Theaters will sell fewer tickets.
   b) Theaters’ revenues will increase.
   c) The quality of movie theaters will improve.
   d) The number of videos rented will decrease.
   e) Popcorn purchases at theaters will increase.

58. What is the major effect of a purchase of bonds by the Federal Reserve?
   a) A reduction in the supply of common stock.
   b) An increase in the volume of commercial bank loans.
   c) A decrease in the supply of money.
   d) An increase in interest rates.
   e) A decrease in investment spending by businesses.
Appendix F (continued)

59. A progressive tax:
   a) encourages more investment from those with higher incomes.
   b) is illustrated by a 6% sales tax.
   c) requires those with higher incomes to pay a higher ratio of taxes to income.
   d) requires every income class to pay the same ratio of taxes to income.
   e) earmarks revenues for poverty reduction.

60. The Federal government’s largest pay out over the past twenty years has been for:
   a) military.
   b) social security.
   c) interest on the national debt.
   d) education.
   e) foreign aid.
Appendix G

Fifth-Grade Teacher’ Social Studies Knowledge and Beliefs
and Their Relationship to Classroom Practices Interview Protocol

Place __________________________   Date _____________________
Starting Time __________________   Ending Time _____________

Thank you for participating in this study. The purpose of this study will be to find out about the knowledge and beliefs fifth-grade teachers have about social studies as well as the classroom practices fifth-grade teachers use to teach social studies.

Research Questions:
1. What is the relationship between fifth-grade teachers’ knowledge of social studies and their classroom practices?
2. What is the relationship between fifth-grade teachers’ beliefs about social studies and their classroom practices?

Interview Questions for Focus Group:

Knowledge
1. How would you define social studies? (Q1)
2. Tell me about your experiences in social studies when you were a child. (Q1)
3. What kind of preparation did you have in college to teach social studies? (Q1)
4. What do you think fifth-grade teachers need to know to teach social studies effectively? (Q1)

Beliefs
5. In what ways do you feel social studies is important in fifth-grade? (Q2)
6. What interests you about the fifth-grade social studies curriculum? (Q2)
7. Do you feel social studies should be based on facts or open to interpretation? (Q2)

Classroom Practices
8. What are some of the ways you approach your teaching of social studies? (Q1 & Q2)
9. What are some of the challenges that you encounter when teaching social studies? (Q1 & Q2)
10. Tell me about the resources you use to teach social studies. (Q1 & Q2)
11. How do you decide what to teach and what not to teach in social studies? (Q1 & Q2)
12. Are there any other comments you wish to make about the topic?
13. Would it be possible for me to contact you to follow up?
Appendix H

List of Codes and Categories from Beliefs and Classroom Practices Survey Question Number Eight

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test - FCAT</th>
<th>Departmentalization - DEP</th>
<th>Social Studies Integrated with Reading - RDG</th>
<th>Social Studies Alternated with Other Subjects - ALT</th>
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Appendix I

Emergent List of Codes and Categories

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Appendix J

List of Codes Categorized by General Concepts Inherent in the Study

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Appendix K

List of Codes According to Theoretical Framework Components

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<th>Nespor</th>
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Appendix L

Data Analysis Matrix

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<th>Question</th>
<th>Teacher Beliefs and Classroom Practices Survey</th>
<th>Knowledge Survey</th>
<th>Focus Group Interview</th>
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<td>3. Does teaching experience moderate the relationship between social studies beliefs and self-reported classroom practices?</td>
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References


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*Theory into Practice, 40*(1), 72-78.


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