

**Inequalities in History-Social Science Teaching under
High-Stakes Accountability:
Interviews with Fifth-Grade Teachers in California**

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Abstract

This article contributes new understanding to a small but critical body of research indicating that high-stakes testing in reading/language arts and mathematics is contributing to marginalization of social studies in the elementary school curriculum across the US. It provides evidence from interviews with fifth-grade teachers that the “squeeze” on history-social science occurs disproportionately in low-performing schools with large minority and low-income populations, where curricular mandates prevail. The interviews shed light on elementary teachers' decision-making in history-social science and how it is influenced by state testing, local community pressures, as well as other influences. It indicates the need for more extensive qualitative study and concludes with a research design to guide future investigations.

Introduction

This article contributes new understanding to a small, but critical, body of research indicating that high-stakes testing in reading/language arts and mathematics is contributing to marginalization of social studies in the elementary school curriculum across the US (Burroughs, Groce, & Webeck, 2005; Jennings & Rentner, 2006; Rock, Heafner, Oldendorf, Passe, O'Connor, Good, & Byrd, 2006; VanFossen, 2005). In California, where history is not tested until eighth grade, this trend began with the Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999 and has been exacerbated by No Child Left Behind (NCLB). But according to survey data (Von Zastrow

& Janc, 2004), the “squeeze” on social studies is not affecting all students. It occurs disproportionately in low-performing schools with large minority populations, thereby contributing to educational inequity in the name of narrowing the achievement gap.

One qualitative study traces the dilemma teachers face in a poor, rural school in California, when social studies gets squeezed due to the press to raise test scores (Wills, 2007). Wills found that teachers manage the problem of how to teach the social studies curriculum without adequate instructional time differently but with a common consequence: Elements of thoughtful teaching (Newmann, 1990) are eradicated. Wills asks whether accountability results, paradoxically, in squeezing content knowledge and thoughtfulness “disproportionately from the education of poor students and students of color” (p. 2042).

The study described here answers that critical question by revealing conditions that create unequal opportunities for teaching and learning history-social science. Although this pilot study is based on limited data, it is the only research to date that explores qualitatively how teachers in widely divergent contexts think about teaching social studies in the current climate of high-stakes accountability. It offers a more complex and nuanced response to the question of what is happening to social studies under No Child Left Behind by examining teachers’ perspectives on factors that contribute to *unequal* opportunities for teaching and learning social studies across schools and districts. This article addresses Thornton’s (1992, cited in VanFossen, 2005) call to learn more about elementary teachers’ decision-making in teaching social studies and how it is influenced by state testing, local community pressures, as well as other influences. It indicates the need for more extensive qualitative study and concludes with a research design to guide future investigations.

Conflicting Loci of Authority and Teachers' Decision-Making

In previous research, I have investigated the dynamics of authority relations between teachers and students and the local and larger factors that influence their social construction (see Pace 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2006; Pace & Hemmings, 2006, 2007). This pilot study points to a different set of issues and contexts related to authority and pertinent to social studies teaching under NCLB. Campbell (2006), drawing on Hansen (2006), distinguishes *professional authority* from *curricular authority*. The latter refers to the legitimacy of the planned curriculum, which consists of both formal frameworks and standards as well as local and potentially innovative initiatives. The former has to do with the teacher’s professional expertise—her ability and commitment to address students’ educational needs (see Pace & Hemmings, 2007). Campbell points out that these two loci of authority may be in conflict, especially when external accountability interferes with teachers’ sense of accountability to themselves and their students. Wills and Sandholtz (in press) describe this conflict in the context of standardized curriculum and instructional mandates that limit professional authority, specifically teachers’ autonomy in curricular and instructional decision-making. They use the term *constrained professionalism* to represent a situation in which a teacher is granted authority over her classroom practice by the school principal but faces real pressures to raise students’ test scores and employ scripted lessons and pacing guides. This concept emerges as a theme in the study presented in this article.

My study also points to the variety of interacting influences on teachers’ decision-making in teaching history-social science (Grant, 1996). Grant argues that the factors “are likely to run as cross-currents, definable in one sense, but mixing and merging in another” (p. 238). Some influences are structural or policy based, while others are individual. Importantly, teachers

construct their own understandings of structures and policy. The authority that teachers grant to these external influences on teaching varies, despite attempts at standardization in educational reform (Grant, 1996). Grant concludes, “What teachers know and are willing to do influences their instructional decisions. But their decisions *also* reflect their interpretations of policy and organizational realities” (p. 265). Thus, research that examines teachers’ perspectives on high-stakes testing and how it does or does not impact their work is crucial at this time. Teachers negotiate the line between curricular, professional, and other sources of authority, as they continually enact daily lessons in their classrooms. Their work is also shaped by the availability and employment of resources.

Research Design and Methodology

In Spring of 2007, I conducted a pilot study based on in-depth interviews with three fifth-grade teachers in each of three California districts about teaching history-social science (as social studies is referred to in California), to lay the groundwork for more extensive research (See Table 1). (All names of people and places are pseudonyms.) Fifth grade was chosen as a focus because history-social science tends to be taken more seriously in the intermediate versus primary grades in elementary school, and in many places it is the last grade before middle school.

In keeping with the nature of qualitative research and especially in a small-scale study, my sample is not representative. Unlike findings from previous studies (Goodlad, 1984; VanFossen, 2005; Zhao & Hoge, 2005), all of the participants were enthusiastic about teaching history-social science and thought it was an important subject; they reported that their students showed enjoyment and interest in social studies as well. In Hoover City, the participants were recruited through a professional development organization, History Connection (also a pseudonym), which involves teachers in monthly meetings focused on teaching history-social science and provides them with valuable resources. In the other districts, I enlisted teachers through contacts at the university where I teach. I had no prior acquaintance with any of the participants.

Table 1*Participating Teachers*

Teacher	Grade level	Years' of experience	School	District
Ms. Schilson	5th	One	Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary	Lagunitas Unified
Ms. Flor	5th	Six	Crestview Elementart	Lagunitas Unified
Ms. Breen	4th-5th split	Ten	Junipero Serra Elementary	Lagunitas Unified
Ms. Walker	5th	Twenty+	Forrest Elementary	Hoover City Unified
Ms. Leeds	5th	Ten	Franklin Heights	Hoover City Unified
Ms. Lockwood	4th-5th split	Twenty+	Johnson Elementary	Hoover City Unified
Ms. Springer	5th	Eleven	Mt. Washington Elementary	Oceanview
Ms. Carson	5th	Twenty+	Mt. Washington Elementary	Oceanview
Ms. Jansen	5th	Twenty+	Evergreen Elementary	Oceanview

The three districts represented by the teachers are geographically close but greatly differ in size and demographics. Both Hoover City and Lagunitas Unified School Districts are extremely ethnically diverse, mid-sized urban districts. Oceanview is small, suburban, with a majority of European Americans with a sizeable Asian-American population (In the Table 2, CST stands for California Content Standards Test; these scores are taken from the district websites.).

Table 2

Schools

Grade 5 - 2006	Ethnicity	Free & reduced lunch	ELL	CST English/LA scores	CST math scores
Forrest (Hoover City Unified)	58% White, 21% African American, 12% Asian, 6% Latino, 3% Other	8%	2%	58*	53*
Johnson (Hoover City Unified)	94% Latino, 3% White, 2% African American, 1% Other	70%	70%	27	45
Franklin Heights (Hoover City Unified)	55% White, 16% African American, 15% Asian, 12% Latino, 2% Other	9%	5%	94	97
Mt. Washington (Oceanview Unified)	72% White, 14% Asian, 3% Latino, 1% African American, 10% Other	0%	5%	84	85
Evergreen (Oceanview Unified)	71% White, 17% Asian, 2% Latino, 1% African American, 9% Other	0%	8%	88	86
Junipero Serra (Lagunitas Unified)	45% Latino, 23% White, 9% Asian, 7% African American, 16% Other	40%	33%	54	53
Crestview (Lagunitas Unified)	47% Asian, 19% White, 11% African American, 10% Latino, 13% Other	41%	26%	68	77
Martin Luther King, Jr. (Lagunitas Unified)	49% African American, 20% Asian, 17% Latino, 3% White, 11% Other	55%	30%	14	22

*During our interview, Ms. Walker said Forrest's scores had dipped in 2006, and that this could be explained by the inclusion of special needs students for the first time. The 2005 scores were: English/LA 69, Math 70.

Except for one, interviews lasted well over an hour. The interviews took place in teachers' classrooms after school, which afforded me the opportunity to make observations of their school and classroom environments. I sent participants a few questions in advance, but the interviews were semi-structured and, at some points, conversational. We spoke about their

history-social science curriculum; instructional approaches; influential factors such as school context, collaboration with other teachers, resources, testing, and standards; and students' responses to subject matter. Teachers showed me textbooks and other curricular materials, student work, and sample report cards.

All interviews were tape recorded, and the tapes were transcribed. I analyzed the data by identifying codes that captured key themes, such as the place of history-social science in the curriculum of the classroom (PLACE) and the autonomy versus constraint on teachers' decision-making about curriculum (AUTO, CONSTR). I organized data accordingly and constructed a matrix to compare responses across these themes. Findings were compared to and informed by those from previous studies.

Inequality across Districts, Schools, and Classrooms

Taken together, the interviews shed light on inequality in history-social science education across schools in the context of high-stakes testing, as well as key influences on the quality of teaching and learning. History-social science was alive and well in the classrooms of teachers in a very affluent, high performing district. Teachers spoke about innovative curriculum and plentiful resources, including staffed computer labs with Internet access, two textbook sets for the whole class, multiple sets of trade books, and classroom aides for every teacher. The existence of rich social studies teaching is an especially important finding because no other study conducted about the marginalization of social studies documents this phenomenon.

In the two other districts the story was more complex. Although all the teachers I interviewed were history-social science enthusiasts, in general, it was given last priority after two hours or more of reading/language arts, an hour or more of math, a half hour of English Language Development, and science. This finding confirms prior research (Rock et al., 2006). But the range among schools in these districts in test scores, resources, and demographics was astounding and clearly corresponded with the opportunity teachers had to teach social studies lessons and units. Even in some high performing schools, teachers thought they had to prioritize subjects that count, meaning those in which test scores affect school accountability measures, over those that do not. In California, that means reading, math, and now science, which is tested in fifth grade.

The following section describes teachers' responses to questions about the place of history-social science in their curriculum. Although surveys report instructional time spent on social studies (Rock et al., 2006; VanFossen, 2005), I found that actual time devoted to the subject is difficult to determine. Teachers have trouble being precise and certain for several reasons: Social studies is integrated with other subjects; it may be the first subject cut whenever other demands arise, and teachers may not be accurate in their estimates if a specific time is not allotted in their schedule. But a relationship among school testing performance, professional authority, and the place of history-social science in the classroom curriculum was evident in the interview data.

The Place of History-Social Science, Teacher Autonomy, and School Status

"I use social studies as kind of my driving force" (Ms. Springer, Oceanview Unified).

"It (history-social science) appears in the reading program; it's embedded in parts of it"

(Ms. Lockwood, Hoover City Unified).

These quotes show the two extremes reported by teachers about the place of history-social science in their curriculum. Based on the interviews, the amount of attention to social studies in the classroom corresponded in part with teachers' freedom to exercise professional authority and school test scores. It seemed that, as would be predicted, those teachers at high-performing schools experience greater autonomy and can choose to spend more time on social studies. But other factors also influenced teacher decision-making and the place of history-social science in each classroom.

All three teachers in Oceanview spoke about making history-social science a priority, despite the fact that, like the other districts, Oceanview's report card minimized it as compared to reading/language arts and mathematics. Ms. Springer and Ms. Carson had a designated time for history-social science in the afternoon, but their schedules were flexible. Ms. Jansen did not have a consistent time for it, but much of the two hours in the computer lab every week was devoted to research projects, and she estimated that social studies happened three days a week. Ms. Springer and Ms. Jansen said the literature students read selections which revolved around the history-social science units they were studying.

The diversity in content and teaching approaches across the three teachers in Oceanview, two of whom taught in the same school, shows that teachers had a lot of freedom to decide what and how they would teach. They all had to teach the states and their capitols, as that was one of two items under history-social science on the report card, and Ms. Springer and Ms. Carson said they used the history-social science state content standards as a guide. But external pressures were minimal. Ms. Carson spoke about having "so much to cover," and said that teachers in the district compared notes on where they were in terms of scope and sequence when they met for the monthly "curriculum articulation day." But she chose to spend a month using an "Interact" simulation, because her class was a "really active group of kids, really motivated by hands-on activities and imagination/play..." This curricular decision was prompted by her "struggling to find something" to address students' wants and needs. She explained, "In my 23 years of teaching, this is one of my most difficult years." It's intriguing to imagine how she and her students might have dealt with the scripted curriculum mandated in low-performing schools.

Ms. Springer's ability to exercise professional authority was evident in her emphasis on "life skills" in addition to the regular history-social science curriculum. She said she spent the first month of school on "community building and learning all about the multiple intelligences" (see Gardner, 1983, 1993). Although she appeared to apologize for being "kind of behind" and claimed, as Ms. Carson did, that "we do try to get through the book as far as possible," the curriculum she enacted seemed very much of her own making. When I asked if she experienced outside pressures, for example from parents, she said, "We can do anything we want."

Ms. Jansen, the third teacher in Oceanview, reveled in the freedom she enjoyed. Because this was her first year teaching fifth grade, for part of the interview she pulled in her colleague, Ms. Jamison, because she wanted me to hear about the curricular units still to be taught that year. Interviewing both of them at once revealed what appeared to be a collaborative relationship that was not only extremely helpful, especially to Ms. Jansen, but immensely enjoyed by both of them. There were a number of units that did not conform to the state standards. One was a study of immigration and an Ellis Island simulation, which Ms. Jansen loved because it elicited so much imagination and enthusiasm from students. Another was an oral history students conducted with elderly family members and historical fiction writing. A third was Living History, based on an earlier biography project, in which students paired up and created a dialogue based on the

famous people they had researched. During the course of the interview, the teachers talked about cutting way back on the Native Americans unit so that they could study the Civil War, which lies outside of the state standards. I asked if there would be anything to prevent them from doing that, and they said no. As Ms. Jansen started to brainstorm, Ms. Jamison said, “Absolutely, I agree. Let’s do it.” She chuckled and addressed me: “And you’re right. We don’t have anything that keeps us from deciding that.” At that point, Ms. Jansen asked if the immigration unit was in the standards. Ms. Jamison replied that it was not: “I just do it because I love the simulation.” Ms. Jansen said she was eager to do another simulation before the end of the year.

When I told the two teachers about my interest about what was happening to social studies in the context of high-stakes accountability in which some schools were pressured to raise test scores, they said they could not imagine having to use a scripted curriculum:

Ms. Jansen: How could you stand to teach? How unprofessional.

Ms. Jamison: It’s so insulting.

Ms. Jansen: It would take all the fun out of it.

Ms. Jamison: It really would.

The two teachers seemed to suggest that external mandates stripped away authority, which for them was crucial to their professional identity and satisfaction.

Ms. Walker, who taught at one of the highest performing and most affluent schools in Hoover City, also said that history-social science was the “umbrella of the classroom” under which she taught reading, writing, and art. Although Open Court, a scripted reading program, had been adopted for the entire district several years before, she felt free not to use it in her classroom.

The other two teachers in Hoover City said they had too many other demands to make history-social science a focus. Interestingly, Ms. Leeds, at a school similar to Ms. Walker’s, said it was “generally on the back burner” along with science. This year she was doing more than previously and attributed it to a new textbook with online and compact disk versions, which meant she could assign all kinds of interesting homework. In class, she scheduled history-social science during first period, when students struggling with reading or math were pulled out for extra help. She explained, “I don’t like to do reading or math because then they are going to miss it. So I do social studies then, which is not tested.” Prior research documents this phenomenon in North Carolina (Rock, et al., 2006). She also said she alternated between social studies and science—she would not be able to fit both in her schedule. Ms. Leeds employed Open Court as her reading program, even though she said that at her school, teachers had a “certain amount of flexibility” and that no one was “breathing down on our necks.” She complained that her social studies curriculum was haphazard, because she did not have enough time to plan. Perhaps the demands on time outside the school day for preparation also influenced the place of history in her classroom.

Ms. Lockwood, who taught at a low performing and low-income school in Hoover City, also addressed history-social science through homework assignments. But these did not involve computers, and she complained that many students did not do it. She said her curriculum was highly prescribed: “Our model makes us do ELD (English Language Development) thirty minutes every morning; from that point on, it’s constant OCR (Open Court Reading) til lunchtime.” She said after lunch she spent at least an hour and a half on math, which she thought was the most important subject. Ms. Lockwood went on to provide a litany of requirements:

On top of that, you're required 100 minutes of PE every week...on top of that, an hour of computer, on top of that library, on top of that, students are pulled out for speech, on top of that, we now have an eight week program...four weeks on family health...four week banking unit...on top of that, you have assemblies, on top of that, practicing for the Martin Luther King performance, on top of that...,we're supposed to do tolerance.... There's an awful lot of things.

Almost all teachers spoke about their curriculum being crowded with so much they had to do, but Ms. Lockwood was noteworthy in conveying the feeling of being overburdened. Different from the other teachers in Hoover City, she represented those who were monitored by visits from groups of “principals and evaluators” to insure teachers were compliant with the pacing of the scripted curriculum.¹ At the same time, Ms. Lockwood did find time to use materials and lessons about the Salem Witch Trials from the history-social science professional development group she had joined a couple of years before. She told me that this group, sanctioned by the district, afforded her “protection” so she could “actually teach history.”

Ms. Walker, who was “not under scrutiny” due to her school’s high status, had previously taught at a lower performing school and was politically involved in the district. She attested that “under the real regimented type of teaching that’s a result of NCLB, it’s harder and harder to function.” She said that at a different school she probably would not be able to teach discrete units in history-social science that would integrate reading and writing: “There’s a lot of principals that wouldn’t let you do that ‘cause the test scores are so important.”

The place of history-social science for teachers in Lagunitas Unified also was mixed. Ms. Flor at a high performing school said her class focused on it the last hour of each day. Ms. Schilson, teaching in a low performing and low income setting that was designated as both a Reading First and Math First school due to low test scores, tried to teach history social-science three days a week, but it was difficult because the “vast majority” of time had to be spent on reading or math. Her daily schedule was very similar to Ms. Lockwood’s, except the mandated scripted reading program was Houghton-Mifflin. Also similar to Ms. Lockwood, Ms. Schilson described how her school was monitored through visits that occurred three times a year, by a group of ten or so district administrators to make sure teachers were in compliance. She said the mandates “most definitely” impacted her history-social science curriculum: “Half the time you don’t have the time for it. Many classes don’t do social studies or science because we have no time.” She said the only way to teach the curriculum was when the reading or ELD curriculum addressed topics that coincided with the history textbook.

Ms. Breen, at a moderately high-performing school with a socio-economically and ethnically diverse population, said she did not teach “serious” history-social science the first half of the year, focusing on science instead. She had two reasons. One reason was her collaboration with an exciting program that sent science majors from a local university to work with her class. Another reason was the standardized science test. Interestingly, she was not concerned about state accountability; she wanted the students—and their parents—to feel good about their scores on the science test. She did teach history-social science during the second half of the year, motivated by a major end of the year field trip to cover the curriculum through the Gold Rush.

Ms. Breen said that even at her relatively high performing school, “[E]verybody...flips out about everything they have to cover.” She explained that the pressure comes from the teachers themselves in response to high-stakes testing:

We know that if our test scores drop then we're going to be in trouble. That we're going to, all of a sudden, get this negative attention. We're going to have people walking through our school. We're going to have mandated programs. There's all kinds of things that will change in my classroom and I don't want it. And parents look at those test scores.

We see that teachers' decisions are shaped by different and sometimes unpredictable factors, including policy and individual proclivities and the ways in which teachers make meaning of these factors (Grant, 1996). But in low-performing schools, their authority in making curricular decisions is constrained by mandated scheduling and programs targeted at raising reading/language arts and math scores (Wills & Sandholtz, in press). As we see in this study, individual teachers, even under the mandates of high-stakes accountability, still are the "gatekeepers" (Thornton, 1991) of curriculum. Although shaped to varying extents by external demands, their decisions about how much social studies to teach, what to teach, and how to teach it, vary.

Teaching Approaches Emphasize Language Arts

"I have kids read historical fiction through the year as we're studying each time period" (Ms. Walker, Hoover City Unified).

"When we are focusing on social studies, I do my literature studies with content" (Ms. Springer, Oceanview Unified).

"It's language arts through the curriculum of history" (Ms. Flor, Lagunitas Unified).

Although individual teachers spoke about using different approaches to teach history-social science, a major common factor was the integration of historical content with language arts, especially reading and writing. Ironically, in higher performing and affluent schools, teachers were more able to link high quality literature with history, because they had funds to buy sets of books and more time and freedom to teach reading through trade books.

In Hoover City, the teachers I interviewed were influenced by History Connection, their professional development group. Through in-service workshops, teachers learned specific strategies to address literacy through the history-social science curriculum, such as "deconstructing the text." A major emphasis was placed on historical fiction, and this year all teachers in the group were using a book called *My Side of the Story*, written about the Salem Witch Trials.

Ms. Walker said she structured her curriculum around four- to six-week units, each of which revolved around a historical novel. A major activity in each unit was expository writing, in which students learned to think critically, take notes, and write persuasive essays. They kept journals on the books they read, practiced vocabulary exercises, and completed written exams. Teachers in all three districts used the social studies text for having students read aloud and discuss their understanding of what they had read. Ms. Jansen divided her class into literature circles, with each group reading a different book on the same theme and reporting back to the class. Ms. Springer used trade books that related to social studies topics, such as survival stories.

Several teachers spoke about research projects on Native American groups in which students read various sources, took notes, and presented their findings to the class.

In addition to language arts, some teachers talked about making history come alive for their students. Ms. Walker engaged her class in hands-on activities. Every year, every grade at her school had a Living History Day; the fifth-grade theme was Colonial history. With the help of parent volunteers, the fifth-grade teachers set up “stations” in the lunchroom through which students circulated to do different activities, such as making Colonial wigs and hats, playing Colonial games, learning Colonial dances, and so on. I attended part of the day and saw that everyone was in costume and immersed in a fun exploration of various aspects of Colonial life. One of the stations focused on African Americans in Colonial history. The fifth-grade classes spent project time building Colonial structures such as houses and churches for Living History Day. These projects were also aided by parent volunteers. Ms. Walker had told me about going with her colleague to Williamsburg, VA, for an institute on Colonial history and buying kits with artifacts and materials.

Ms. Walker in Hoover City and Ms. Springer in Oceanview were the only teachers who talked about including citizenship education as a significant part of their curriculum. They used specific curricular programs to do so, and Ms. Springer's class elected classroom officers. In Lagunitas, Ms. Shilson and Ms. Flor talked about discussing current issues, ranging from Presidential candidates to gender and sexuality, with their classes.

History-social science teaching in Lagunitas differed from that of Oceanview and Hoover City in its emphasis on relating the subject to students' lives, celebrating diversity, and criticizing injustices in the history of the United States. All three teachers spent time exploring the cultural backgrounds of students in the class. Ms. Shilson, whose schedule was largely dominated by Reading First and Math First mandates, was gradually implementing a unit she had created the year before for her master's thesis on diversity. She gave her ethnically diverse class a “huge report” to do over winter break in which they explored their own cultural identity by talking with their parents and grandparents. This was especially valuable because family communication was “oftentimes hard” due to difficult family circumstances in this low-income community. Ms. Shilson said she taught Black History year round, which fit well with the large African-American population at her school. She found that her students were eager to discuss issues related to social justice, both in their school and in the larger world. For example, they asked why the kids in the new Japanese Bilingual Program were given laptops to use and had special assemblies, whereas they did not. Also, they were curious about politics, asking for information about Hillary Clinton and Barak Obama. Ms. Shilson said, “We talk about a lot of controversial things because I think that American history has so many...” She was highly motivated to teach in an urban school and focus on social justice after her own consciousness awakening in courses in her teacher education program.

Along with the more culturally responsive, social justice-oriented curriculum among the younger teachers in Lagunitas, I also noticed that, in contrast, two teachers in Oceanview seemed concerned about students' criticism of past injustices. They mentioned that students remarked upon the cruelty of the Conquistadors, the taking of land from Native Americans, and the treatment of Black people. Teachers thought they needed to make students understand that one could not judge the past by today's standards, and that the worldview at the time supported what happened. One teacher in Hoover City made no mention of culturally responsive curriculum, despite her claim that 99% of her students are Latino. I surmise that teacher education, at least in California, has evolved considerably in its attention to social justice and multiculturalism, and I

propose that this difference in orientation and practice between older and younger teachers merits examination.

A difference between affluent and low-income schools was field trips. In Oceanview, classes went on four or five major trips every year. Certainly a factor influencing history-social science teaching and curriculum is the availability of resources (Rock, et al., 2006). Teachers' discussion of these resources revealed their importance for the quality of their work lives and their teaching.

Resources and History-Social Science Teaching

I'll tell ya, you die and go to heaven when you teach in a school like this; you can really teach. They give you money like you wouldn't believe...I have an aide...families who can afford to keep their kids in public schools supplement them in a huge way...don't kid ourselves that there's any equity out there. (Ms. Walker, Hoover City Unified)

In addition to school test scores and teachers' autonomy to determine their curriculum, particular resources influenced history-social science teaching. Some of these resources largely corresponded to the socio-economic demographics of the school. Schools in wealthy communities were supported by extra money raised by parents, while those in low-income communities went without. District wide resources, such as computers, interacted with specific conditions within schools. For example, in Hoover City, students in all three schools had computer lab once a week, but depending on the staffing, teachers were or were not able to use that time to extend classroom activities.

Computer resources in Oceanview were, not surprisingly, plentiful. Ms. Springer and Ms. Carlson had a subscription to a cutting edge technology program in addition to four computers in each classroom. Their students were going to learn to create elaborate PowerPoint presentations on research projects. Ms. Jansen, enthused about the "fabulous" computer teacher at her school, observed: "We all worship the ground she walks on." She said about half the time devoted to social studies was spent working on projects in the lab.

In contrast, Ms. Lockwood in Hoover City was pessimistic about the use of computers. She complained about the computer lab teacher: "She won't let us do anything to extend the class...games—that's the program." She also said that students did not know how to type, so the four computers she had in her classroom were not so useful.

The two other teachers in Hoover City also had four computers in their classrooms and valued them. Ms. Walker's situation sounded similar to Ms. Jansen's in Oceanview. Her school's lab was "fully funded by the PTA" and she described it as "state of the art." It was staffed by two people. Ms. Walker told me that in other schools, the district could not fund the support staff needed to maintain the computers they bought. She, like Ms. Jansen, did not even need to stay with the students in the lab.

Teachers especially appreciated classroom aides. In Oceanview, every teacher had an aide for at least ten hours a week. Ms. Jansen had two full time aides due to the presence of two students with special needs in her class. She said this was "very unusual," and that it was "so fun," and they were "having a ball." It was particularly helpful to have three adults working with students on their writing. Ms. Walker in Hoover City also mentioned her aide, who worked with her seven hours a week. But in this district, aides were funded by individual schools. In

Lagunitas Unified, none of the teachers had aides. Although Ms. Breen was thrilled to teach at a school with what she considered abundant resources, which paid for an exceptional arts program, in response to a question about aides, she replied, “Nooo, there’s nothing like that.” She said having a student teacher made an enormous difference, because there were eight to ten students who needed and benefited tremendously from extra support.

Textbooks and trade books were another resource pertinent to social studies teaching. In Oceanview, teachers spoke about having two textbooks that complemented one another beautifully. The older one, *History Alive*, published by Teachers' Curriculum Institute (TCI), provided a clear, easy-to-read overview and hands-on activities. Ms. Springer called it an “excellent program,” and Ms. Jansen said, “I love it.” But the teachers were very excited to have Joy Hakim's *A History of US* because it provided primary sources, “great stories,” and “rich material.” Teachers said it was a more difficult book and they would read aloud from it to supplement the other text, which did not go in depth.

In Lagunitas Unified, the teachers had also received *A History of US*, but it served as their only history-social science textbook. Reading was done out loud with the whole class. If Oceanview teachers considered it challenging for their students, whose reading levels were so high, one must question how appropriate the text was for struggling readers. Hoover City teachers had a new textbook called *Reflections*, which came with computer-based supplements. Ms. Walker also had a set of Joy Hakim's *History of US*.

Another difference in available materials was the ability to purchase trade books. Classrooms in Oceanview had class sets of multiple trade books, many of which were historical fiction. Ms. Springer and Ms. Jansen revolved some history-social science units around these books, as did Ms. Walker in Hoover City. This opportunity was limited in Lagunitas. Ms. Breen said that not having a collection of grade-level books to support the curriculum was her biggest obstacle to teaching history-social science.

A noteworthy resource not dependent on SES was the history-social science professional development group History Connection, located in Hoover City. Especially valuable was Ms. Walker, who had been involved for many years and had enlarged her professional expertise through ongoing educational opportunities offered or supported by the group. Ms. Leeds also made specific references to teaching strategies she had learned and to another fifth-grade teacher in her school who had encouraged her involvement in the group and with whom she collaborated. Both teachers said that their favorite part of History Connections was learning from the lectures given by historians invited by the group. Importantly, teachers found opportunities for continued education and collaboration rewarding and beneficial to their history-social science teaching.

Conclusions and Future Research

Although conclusions are tentative due to limited data, this study shows that high stakes accountability under NCLB is squeezing instructional time for social studies disproportionately, depending on the status of schools and districts. In fact, the teachers I interviewed in the high performing, affluent suburb of Oceanview reported that this phenomenon did not exist for them. Teachers in the lowest performing and lowest income schools talked about the difficulty finding adequate time for history-social science, due to mandated scheduling for reading/language arts and math. A salient issue is the nurturing versus constraining of teachers' professional authority. In a high performing, affluent district, the teachers I interviewed had the freedom to utilize their

professional capacities as they saw fit. In the other districts, teachers viewed high-stakes testing as an impediment to teacher decision-making over curriculum and experienced this constraint to varying extents. However, in the face of external pressures, individuals managed to teach history-social science in ways they found meaningful, supported in one case by individual values and a teacher education experience and in the other by a professional development group.

These findings provide the basis for more extensive systematic investigation of what actually is happening to history-social science education within and across classrooms and schools under varying conditions, such as school performance and student demographics. Interviews with teachers are necessary, but not sufficient, to examine the enacted history curriculum—the “curriculum-in-use” (Werner, 1991). Investigation of classroom lessons will shed much light on actual teacher decision-making as well as inequalities in history-social science teaching and learning. Below is an outline of a possible research agenda.

The following research questions drive the study:

1. What is the enacted U.S. History curriculum in fifth-grade classrooms within a high performing school and a low performing school in each of two districts in California, and what does it reveal about educational purposes and values?
2. How do school administrators, teachers, and students view the purposes and value of the social studies curriculum?
3. How do contextual factors, including Academic Performance Index (API) score/rankingⁱⁱ, school culture and administration, students, teachers’ aims, and wider educational values shape the enacted curriculum of fifth-grade history?

The sample includes two mid-sized, ethnically diverse school districts comparable in demographics and range of API scores. In each district, a school with consistently high scores and a school with consistently low scores are selected. (Performance levels generally are correlated with socio-economic status.) All schools have reputations as good schools with experienced teachers in order to control the number of variables that shape teaching. All teacher participants are attempting to teach history.

The researcher documents the enacted curriculum through daily observations of history-social science lessons (as designated by the teacher) in at least two fifth-grade classes in each of four schools. During observations, detailed field notes are taken and lessons are audiotaped when possible for discourse analysis. Classroom observations reveal opportunities to teach and learn history, including instructional time, content of lessons, and qualities of teaching such as thoughtfulness. The use of textbooks and other resources, student work, and classroom discourse are also examined.

The researcher interviews teachers about their aims for history and factors that shape their practices, including standards, testing, curricular materials (textbook), students, administration, and colleagues. Questions will explore whether and how their history-social science teaching has changed over time. Interviews with students in focus groups focus on their perspectives on studying U.S. history and what it means to them.

Additionally, the researcher conducts participant observation at faculty meetings, formal events, and informal gatherings at each school. Interviews with principals and district administrators reveal their views on history-social science and its current status. Finally, relevant documents such as school accountability report cards, curriculum guidelines, and news items from the school, district, state, and federal policy contexts are collected.

This kind of study will produce empirical findings to inform critical debate about the consequences of current state and federal policy. It should generate follow-up research on the effects of these consequences, for example challenges that confront high school social studies teachers when their students have a weak background in the subject. This research also should contribute to theory about what constitutes and shapes the exercise of teachers' professional authority in the current context of school accountability based on high-stakes standardized testing. Investigation of this set of issues should have critical bearing on how we think about reform in contemporary American education.

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ⁱ Ms. Lockwood's school facilities also were dingy and dilapidated, consisting mostly of classroom portables badly in need of paint. All the windows had bars, blocking any view. Due to its proximity to the freeway, traffic noise was very loud. It was a very depressed and depressing physical environment.

ⁱⁱ On the basis of state testing, schools are assigned an Academic Performance Index (API) score from 200-1000 (the state target is 800) and ranking from 1 to 10.