

Teachers Think Aloud About Picture Books  
For Teaching Social Studies in the Primary Grades

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## **Abstract**

Social studies has long been relegated to the sidelines in the elementary grades. Teachers have often used children's literature to teach social studies (e.g., Hicks, 1996; Hinde, 2005, 2009; Kent & Simpson, 2008) but there are concerns that this integration shortchanges social studies learning (e.g., Alleman & Brophy, 1993, 1994; Brophy, Alleman, & Knighton, 2007). This qualitative study involved teachers in the primary grades, thinking aloud as they read three picture books with social studies content; the emphasis was on the teachers' planning processes so students were not present during the study. Participants included 27 experienced teachers from grades K-2, recruited from 14 suburban and rural schools located in a large metropolitan area in the upper Midwest.

Verbal analysis (Chi, 1997) indicated that the participants perceived both social studies and literacy aspects related to each book; more attention was often paid to the social studies content than literacy development. This finding is contrary to research which found that elementary teachers (K-6) often focus on developing literacy skills more than social studies understanding when reading texts to teach social studies (Boyle-Baise, Hsu, Johnson, Serriere, & Stewart, 2008). The 27 participants utilized books for multiple purposes in order to address curriculum demands and time constraints: to teach literacy skills, to develop literary appreciation, and to foster content understanding. These findings have implications for publishers, curriculum planners, and teacher educators, as well as the teachers themselves. Given the resources and freedom to explore both literacy and content aspects of the literature they use in their class, teachers in the primary grades would be both willing and able to meaningfully address both.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The year-planning meeting of the second-grade team was going long and teachers were anxious to get back to their classrooms to prepare for the new school year. Carolyn, a new hire fresh from the local college, was trying to fill in her plan book and absorb all the requirements. She looked over her schedule and realized that social studies was not included anywhere. When Carolyn brought this up to the other teachers, she was told that special projects cover social studies, like the Thanksgiving dinner where the children dress up as Pilgrims or American Indians and the Market Day where the students sell items they make. The field trip at the end of the year to the heritage center also “counted as” social studies. The daily schedule just did not allow a specific time for the subject. Carolyn wasn’t sure this was enough social studies but was told that most teachers just incorporate social studies into the reading, especially since the basal reader had many biographical and historical selections. Carolyn questioned whether this was really doing social studies, but she was counseled that this was all there was time for. “Use some good books during reading time,” another teacher said, “and those second graders can find out about all sorts of history and such.” Carolyn found herself wondering, “Can I teach significant social studies by reading books?”

### **General Problem Background**

Carolyn is a composite, representing the many teachers who find they have little time to teach social studies, particularly in the primary grades. Her story is based on my own experiences as a first-year teacher, but Allison, a second-year teacher and one of the

participants in this study, told a very similar story. Studies of classrooms show that social studies receives little attention across the elementary grades, due in part to accountability measures that emphasize literacy and math in school (Bailey, Shaw, & Hollifield, 2006; Duplass, 2007; Fitchett & Heafner, 2010; Houser, 1995; Lintner, 2006; O'Connor, Heafner, & Groce, 2007; Pascopella, 2006). The marginalization of elementary social studies has prompted many teachers to focus on integrating it into literacy instruction as a way of preserving space for social studies in the curriculum (Hutton & Burstein, 2008; Kent & Simpson, 2008). Intuitively, it seems natural: Children's literature includes many themes and concepts that can be used to teach the big ideas of social studies (Alleman, Knighton, & Brophy, 2010) and various studies have demonstrated that students can learn social studies from select children's literature (Beck & McKeown, 1991; Guzzetti, Kowalinski, & McGowan, 1992; Levstik, 1986; Villano, 2005).

### **Children's Literature and the Social Studies Connection**

Teachers have used children's literature to engage students in social studies, addressing both cognitive and affective goals (Beck & McKeown, 1991; Guzzetti et al., 1992; Levstik, 1986; Villano, 2005). Indeed, literature "explores the nature of human beings, the condition of humankind" (Lukens, 2003, p. 9). Because the social studies concern the study of people and their interactions, such definitions extend the natural connection of literature and social studies. Galda and Cullinan (2006) described literature in a way that could be used to define the social studies:

Literature entertains and informs. It enables young people to explore and understand their world. It enriches their lives and widens their horizons. They learn about people and places on the other side of the world as well as ones down

the street. They travel back and forth in time to visit familiar places and people, to meet new friends, and to see new worlds. They can explore their own feelings, shape their own values, and imagine lives beyond the one they live. (p. 5)

Many teachers try to cover social studies through literacy lessons, but this type of integration may shortchange the social studies content. While elementary teachers may use literature to keep or to bring social studies into the daily schedule, there may be some confusion about what constitutes “teaching social studies” with children’s literature. There is little research in this area. One recent study of 13 elementary teachers who thought they were teaching social studies by incorporating literature with social studies themes, held that the teachers were actually giving literacy lessons; most social studies learning was by chance, not by design (Boyle-Baise, Hsu, Johnson, Serriere, & Stewart, 2008). Sunal and Sunal (2007-8) reported that many of the 39 K-3 teachers who were mentors to their preservice teachers used the reading series as the basis for social studies. For some, integration meant that they “look at a unit and try to stick in some social studies” (p. 38). These findings question the value of integrating literature and social studies; they also raise questions about what elementary teachers think about when using children’s literature with social studies content.

### **The Marginalization of Elementary Social Studies**

Some form of social studies has been part of the elementary curriculum since public schooling began in the United States, predominantly through the teaching of history, civics, and geography in an expanding horizons approach where the curriculum starts with the family unit and extends to the community, to the state, and eventually the world (Barton, 2009). The social studies speak to the goal of public education—to

develop informed citizens who are able to participate in our democracy (Levstik & Barton, 2005). However, elementary social studies has long been on the “back burner” (Houser, 1995, p. 147) as the subject teachers get to if there is time, and as the subject where “disjointed topics and trite textbooks” prevail (Duplass, 2007, p. 137). Lately, in part because of *No Child Left Behind* legislation (NCLB, 2002) and the corresponding focus on testing reading and mathematics, social studies has become even more marginalized (Fitchett & Heafner, 2010; Lintner, 2006; Pascopella, 2006; VanFossen, 2005). A national survey of teachers held that high-stakes testing can lead to an emphasis on test preparation and reduce teaching time for untested subjects such as social studies (Pedulla et al., 2003). Interviews conducted with fifth-grade teachers in California (Pace, 2008) and a review of testing consequences in Michigan (Segall, 2003) reveal similar evidence of less time being spend on social studies in the elementary grades. It has been neglected in many elementary schools (Bailey et al., 2006; O’Connor et al., 2007) and integrated into either the literacy curriculum (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008; Kent & Simpson, 2008) or other subject areas (Hutton & Burstein, 2008; Volger, 2003). While many elementary teachers try creative ways to include social studies in the school day (Haas & Laughlin, 2001; Holloway & Chiodo, 2009; Hutton & Burstein, 2008; McCall, 2006), it is often relegated to secondary importance.

The marginalization of social studies in the elementary curriculum appears particularly prevalent in schools serving low-socioeconomic students where there may be a heavy emphasis on reading and math to address low test scores in high-stakes testing. A national survey of public school principals reported that instructional time for untested

subject areas (such as social studies) had decreased due to accountability measures:

“Overall, 29% of elementary principals reported a decrease in time for social studies...[and] a full 47% of high-minority elementary school principals reported decreases” (von Zastrow & Janc, 2004, p. 8). Sunal and Sunal (2007-8) had preservice teachers report on the social studies they saw in their field placements, which included both lower socioeconomic status (SES) schools and higher SES city schools. They found that schools not making Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) had little social studies. Preservice teachers reported that their cooperating teachers felt justified in “sacrificing social studies” and that focusing on reading was “in the best interests of the child” (Sunal & Sunal, 2007-8, p. 35). Pace (2008) conducted interviews with fifth-grade teachers serving in low-performing schools with large minority and low-income populations; she found that the teachers felt so much pressure to focus on reading, writing, and math that they could not adequately address social studies. Students needing extra help in reading or math are often “pulled out” of social studies class. In a survey done in Maryland, 53% of elementary teachers responded that students were pulled out of their social studies instructional time; often these students are “in high-poverty high minority schools [where] the data suggest that these are the very same students who need social studies the most” (Stack & Burke, 2010, p. 12). This neglect of the social studies in high-minority schools may lead to a limited understanding of what it means to participate in society as an informed citizen, further bifurcating society into those who are players in the political arena and those who are on the sidelines.

## **The Integrative Nature of Social Studies**

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 1994) describes the social studies as “the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence” (p. 3) and suggests that “powerful social studies is both integrated and integrative across disciplines, time, and space, as well as across the curriculum” (p. 165). Many researchers point to curriculum integration as a means of keeping social studies in the elementary classroom (Hinde, 2005, 2009; Kent & Simpson, 2008). Some scholars contend that social studies is being taught through the development of social studies concepts such as responsibility and respect, integrated throughout the curriculum (Holloway & Chiodo, 2009; Martin 1990), or through the social studies concepts found in children’s literature (Owens & Nowell, 2001). However, others advocate for a more systematic approach that focuses on the big ideas and goals of social studies (Alleman et al., 2010; Boulware & Crow, 2008; Brophy & Alleman, 1993, 2006, 2007; Zahorik, 1996). Critics argue that integrating social studies into other curricula, such as literacy, shortchanges social studies as a distinct and meaningful subject (Alleman & Brophy, 1993, 1994; Brophy & Alleman, 1991, 2006, 2007; Schug & Cross, 1998).

### **Study Focus**

The marginalization of elementary social studies is a long-standing issue, recently exacerbated by accountability measures (Barton, 2009; Olwell & Raphael, 2006). Efforts to integrate social studies into literacy lessons often focus primarily on literacy with little social studies development (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008; Sunal & Sunal, 2007-8).

Recognizing the teacher as the gatekeeper of the curriculum (Thornton, 2005), this study

focused on early elementary teachers' thinking about selected texts and descriptions of the concepts they would want students to know about or to learn from the texts. In the primary grades, teachers often select and read books to children so the teachers' approach to reading a text may influence whether students learn significant social studies from that text. There is little research related to the use of literature to teach social studies in the primary grades; most research has focused on students in higher grades where students are more independent readers than those in grades K-2. For this reason, this study focused on the teachers in the primary grades to examine what they would do with books with social studies content. I also consider how the teachers understand and think about teaching social studies in the primary grades.

### **Study Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to explore how primary-grade teachers read children's literature with social studies content. This study seeks to better understand the phenomenon of using children's literature to teach social studies, guided by the following research questions:

1. What do teachers in the primary grades focus on when previewing children's literature with social studies content?
2. What planning processes do teachers in the primary grades utilize as they preview children's literature for use in teaching social studies?
3. What factors do teachers perceive influence their teaching of social studies in the primary grades?

## **Research Approach**

The participants in this study were 27 teachers in the primary grades (K-2) recruited through a snowball sampling strategy (Patton, 1990) that began with contacting principals and key teachers in various suburban schools. Each teacher completed a demographic and interest questionnaire; I conducted individual interviews in the teacher's classroom or other convenient location. Within the interview context, teachers were asked to think aloud about how they would use three picture books in their primary curriculum. The teachers each verbally reported what they would focus on if they used the books with their students. After the think aloud exercise, I asked teachers about their social studies curriculum and their use of literature to teach social studies.

Picture books were used for the think-aloud task; they are the literature of choice in the primary grades. To ensure quality of social studies content, each of the three books used in this study came from the Notable Trade Books for Young People list, published annually by the National Council for the Social Studies and the Children's Book Council. Social studies in the primary grades typically focuses on families, communities, holidays, and simple economic concepts; all of these were represented by the picture books used.

I see social studies in just about every book; this bias makes me sensitive to this process. I do recognize that a teacher's purpose for reading the book may not include social studies so it was important to specify this purpose for teachers within the design of the study; each participant, therefore, was given three picture books to read and asked to focus on social studies for the last two books, after reading the first book without the prompt to focus on social studies.

Following the think-aloud task, the interview included discussion about curriculum to learn about the teachers' perceptions of the factors which influence their teaching of social studies in the primary grades. Because teachers are required to follow curricula established by their schools or school districts, this is a critical factor in what is taught in the classroom.

The data sources consisted of 27 questionnaires and 27 think-aloud protocols and interviews. The transcribed protocols and interviews were entered into qualitative data analysis software (QSR International NVivo 10) which was used to categorize the responses. The data were analyzed to find patterns in the approaches of the participants. Findings are presented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, based on the three research questions.

### **The Researcher**

My background influenced my interactions with the participants and my understanding of their comments. I believe that my own experience of teaching at the primary level (three years in grades K and 2), allowed me to interact easily with the participants and understand the context that they are working in, but the comments are still viewed from my perspective. I became an elementary teacher through a non-traditional path as I did my teacher education program 20 years after graduating with a bachelor's degree in political science, which included a minor in history. This educational background provides content knowledge in the social studies as well as a bias that values the teaching of that content area. During my doctoral program in curriculum and instruction, I have focused on social studies education with a supporting program in literacy education, which led to licensure as a reading teacher. These two programs allow

me to bring the focus of both disciplines to this study. I have been a graduate instructor in elementary social studies methods for three years and in literacy development for secondary social studies for one semester. I have supervised student teachers at the elementary and secondary levels for over five years so I have seen many different classrooms and ways of work. I am an assistant professor of teacher education at a private college, where I teach instructional design and elementary methods classes, such as social studies, reading, communications arts, and fine arts. This position helped me gain entrance to the schools where I recruited participants, and my experiences helped me to quickly establish a rapport with the participants during the interviews.

### **Assumptions**

Based on my experience as a primary teacher (grades K and 2) and a social studies methods instructor, I made five assumptions regarding this study. First, teachers in the primary grades will have enough background knowledge to understand the cultural universals (such as food, community, and family) in the literature used in this study. As products of elementary teacher education programs, most teachers have not been required to take many social studies classes (Bennett, 1993). Those participants who grew up in the United States public school system, may have had little social studies as elementary students themselves, and may replicate the practices they experienced in their elementary education (Skelar, 1998). This assumption is based on responses of preservice teachers in the teacher education classes I teach, as well as relevant literature, including the “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 2002). While the picture books used in this study

deal with readily apparent cultural universals, teachers may not explicitly identify these as social studies concepts.

A second assumption is that while the teachers may have different accountability and curriculum demands because they are from seven school districts and two different states, they have social studies content that is typical for grades K-2. This is based on a cursory review of the state standards for the two states where the study was conducted.

Additionally, a third assumption is that teachers are the curriculum-makers or the “gatekeepers” of the curriculum and determine what is actually happening in their classrooms (Thornton, 2005). As such, how they utilize a text in the classroom can establish what their students take away from the text, an idea that stems from reader response theory (Rosenblatt, 1994).

Another assumption is that teachers in the primary grades are accustomed to reading children’s literature and would be able to respond to the think-aloud tasks. They also have experience promoting literacy goals across content areas, because elementary teachers are required to do such (Pressley, 2005). Both of these assumptions are based on my own experience as a K-2 teacher, a reading teacher, and a field supervisor.

The final assumption is that literature and social studies could be naturally-joined allies in the elementary curriculum because both are about people and their interactions. My personal experience as a student, an avid reader, an elementary teacher, a reading teacher, and a social studies educator, forms the basis of this assumption.

## **Rationale of the Study**

My interest in this study began with my desire to uncover ways to effectively utilize children's literature or picture books to teach elementary social studies. While advocacy literature describes many ways to integrate literacy and social studies, there is little research about how teachers in the primary grades view this process. The primary grades (K-2) are the focus of this study because teachers in these grade levels often read aloud for several purposes, including reading instruction and content development. Students are learning to read, but teachers also read to them in order to expose them to content within their comprehension level but above their reading level. Thus, in the primary grades, the teacher's approach and perspective informs the content students are exposed to.

As an elementary teacher and teacher educator, I have observed many different ways that in-service and preservice teachers share literature with children. Why do some teachers address the social studies aspects while others gloss over them? Do teachers who focus on literacy do so to meet the demands of accountability? Do they see the social studies ideas? What influences teachers' approaches to texts with social studies content? These questions came to mind as I thought about the different approaches to reading children's literature with social studies content. As a reader who sees social studies in most books, these questions intrigued me.

The findings of this study may allow educators and curriculum developers to proceed from a more informed perspective of the challenges of teaching elementary social studies. Increased understanding of these issues may show the benefit of including

more literacy in content areas and more content awareness in literacy or literature courses taken in teacher preparation programs.

### **Key Terminology Used in the Study**

The educational terms used in this dissertation are likely familiar to the reader. They may have “everyday” or “common sense” meanings and definitions, but for the purposes of this study, they will be defined as indicated below:

***Big ideas*** – The powerful ideas that are the basis for connecting students’ prior knowledge to subject matter; at the instructional level, examples include: “people make choices based on personal preferences, economic resources, local availability of potential options” and “trade is one way to get the things you need or want” (Alleman et al., 2010, p. 25)

***Children’s literature*** – Books written for children of various genres

***Informational text*** – “the type of nonfiction that conveys information about the natural or social world” (Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2003, p. 16)

***Literacy block*** – At the elementary level, the practice of doing literacy activities – including word study, interactive read alouds, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, and writing workshop – for a set block of time, often 90-120 minutes per day

***Narratives*** – Texts that tell a story, often about a character or characters, and developed as a plot that progresses to a resolution (Galda & Cullinan, 2006)

***Nonfiction*** – books that “are informational sources that explain a subject” (Galda & Cullinan, 2006, p. 13)

**Picture books** – Books with visual images (pictures, photographs, graphic art) that are integral to understanding the text

**Primary grades** – In this study, the primary grades are limited to grades Kindergarten through 2 (K-2); in some circumstances, they may be considered anywhere along the continuum from Pre-Kindergarten to grade 3 (PK-3). The K-2 designation coincides with the Primary reading level of the Notable Social Studies Tradebooks for Young People

**Read alouds** – A literary practice that typically involves a teacher reading aloud to a group of students and discussing the text

**Social studies** – “The integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence” (NCSS, 1994, p. 3)

**Think aloud** – Verbalizing one’s thoughts when reading a text or working a problem

**Trade book** – A book published for the general public; distinct from those distributed exclusively to educational markets

### **Chapter Summary**

Literature is connected to social studies, because both are concerned with people and their interactions. Numerous articles and books promote the use of children’s literature to teach social studies, but few research studies relate to how and why teachers use children’s literature to teach social studies. Research indicates that students can learn social studies from children’s literature, but content development may be left to chance while teachers focus on literacy skills. The present study explores the connection between children’s literature and elementary social studies as seen in the responses of 27 teachers in the primary grades reading three quality social studies picture books and answering

questions about their curriculum. By asking the teachers to think aloud about how they would use selected texts in the primary curriculum, the responses were considered to be indicators of what these teachers think is important (Chi, 1997).

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of the Literature**

The majority of the literature on teaching elementary social studies has addressed descriptions of practices, many of which advocate for the use of children's literature to foster student understanding and interest of social studies. The limited research on these practices has found that elementary students can gain understanding of social studies concepts from reading literature. Little research, however, has focused on the primary grades where time devoted specifically to social studies is the most limited. Students in the primary grades are learning to read, and teachers often read books aloud to share content; the role of the teacher in developing social studies in the primary grades is an important consideration.

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature that considers the theoretical framework this study is based on and other applicable writings, including (1) the relationship between children's literature and social studies, (2) the research regarding the use of children's literature in elementary social studies, and (3) the influences on elementary teachers' perceptions of social studies education. First, I discuss the theoretical framework and then I outline the parameters of the literature review. After an outline of the research, I identify major conclusions from the literature.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The focus of this study is on the participants' perceptions, beliefs, and explanations with regard to their classroom practice. Therefore, a constructivist perspective forms the theoretical foundation of this study. Constructivism looks at the

meaning that individuals make, in this case, the meanings and perceptions individual teachers construct as they read the picture books. A constructionist perspective is also employed to consider the curriculum constraints that bound instructional decisions in the classroom. Constructivism and constructionism are often used interchangeably but are distinguished by Crotty (1998), as outlined in Patton (2002). Constructionism or social construction considers how culture shapes what we say and do (Crotty, 1998); the accountability demands and curriculum constraints that teachers feel they are under could be considered as cultural holds on practice. Therefore, the constructivist perspective guided the study design to capture the teachers' perceptions of the books, which were examined without evaluation to some ideal model of reading the text, while the constructionist perspective guided both the design of interview questions and the interpretation of the teachers' perspective on curriculum.

### **Parameters of the Literature Review**

The focus of this review is to look at what is known about the relationship between children's literature and elementary social studies. This includes an overview of practitioner-based writing including advocacy articles and books, as well as research studies exploring the use of children's literature to teach social studies. My focus is on the literature published from 1985 and 2012; this date range corresponds with the era of literature-based instruction, the rise of standards-based curriculum, and the age of accountability with high-stakes testing focused on reading and math. This review is further limited to studies that involve social studies and literacy or literature with students and/or teachers in grades K-2 (grade levels that correspond to primary grades) but studies

through all the elementary grades informed this study. In addition to studies about the use of children's literature in elementary social studies, this review also explores research related to how elementary teachers perceive the social studies.

Initial database searches on Academic Search Premier and ERIC CSA were done using the search terms *social studies* and *literature* and limited to works published from 1985 to 2012. This produced a large volume of articles and books, many of which are practice-oriented and generally advocate for the use of literature in teaching social studies. The abundance of testimonial and anecdotal evidence attests to the perceived close connection of literature and social studies. Practitioner testimonies often describe pedagogical strategies but do not include the systematic collection of data. Using the references of other articles and the bibliographies of books on teaching elementary social studies (Brophy & Alleman, 2007; Levstik & Barton, 2005; Parker, 2009; Schell & Fisher, 2007; Zarillo, 2004), literacy (Cooper & Kiger, 2009; Irvin, Buehl, & Radcliffe, 2007), integrated instruction (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997; Sandmann & Ahern, 2002), informational text (Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2003; Moss, 2003), content area literacy (Alvermann, Phelps, & Ridgeway, 2007), and children's literature (Galda & Cullinan, 2006; Lukens, 2003) revealed additional references for review. These sources and refined database searches for empirical studies continued until using the terms *elementary social studies*, *reading/literacy/literature* and *research/ methodology/findings* produced 12 peer-reviewed articles. An article on social studies dissertations from 1982-1991 (Saxe, Jackson, & Mraz, 1992) and a search of digital dissertation databases (available from 1992 until 2009) yielded nine relevant studies. A database search utilizing *elementary*

*teachers, social studies, perceptions, and teacher preparation* produced additional studies related to elementary teachers' perceptions about social studies.

Several types of studies were explicitly not included in this review. Studies that included, but did not focus on, the use of children's literature (such as how children develop historical thinking) were not reviewed. Those studies that looked solely at students' usage of social studies textbooks were not included, but those which compared the use of textbooks and literature informed the review for a fuller understanding of how and why different types of texts are used in the elementary grades. Eight of these studies compared the reading of children's literature or trade books with the use of textbooks (Guzzetti et al., 1992; Heubach, 1998; Howe, 1990; Jones, Coombs, & McKinney, 1994; McKinney & Jones, 1993; Steury, 1996; Swift, 1993; VanSledright & Kelly, 1998). These studies informed the study but were not included in the review because they did not cover grades K-2.

Thirteen studies explored the use of children's literature to teach elementary social studies without comparison to a textbook (Howe, 1995; Levstik, 1986, 1989; Levstik & Yessin, 1990; Macken, 2003; Osborne, 1995; Palmer & Stewart, 1997; Penn, 2000; Ramos, 2003; Roser & Keehn, 2002; Smith, Monson, & Dobson, 1992; Suratinah, 1999; Williams et al., 2007). Only the four studies that involved grades K-2 (Levstik & Yessin, 1990; Macken, 2003; Osborne, 1995; Williams et al., 2007) are considered in detail in this review.

## **The Rationale for Teaching Social Studies through Literature**

The elementary social studies curriculum has long been augmented by teachers using social studies literature or trade books such as biographies, historical fiction, and informational text to present the “narrative” of history and to teach social studies through literature (Krey, 1998; Levstik, 1986; Sandmann & Ahern, 2002; Schell & Fisher, 2007). Literature has been a natural fit with social studies as both are tied to the narratives of people, places, and events (Galda & Cullinan, 2006).

Numerous articles and books explain how and why teachers should make use of children’s literature to teach social studies. Many advocate for integrating and using children’s literature across the curriculum (Paquette & Kaufman, 2008; Pottle, 1996). Some say that literature can enliven the content areas (Brozo & Tomlinson, 1986) and make teaching more active and authentic than textbooks alone (Davis & Palmer, 1992). Educators promote historical fiction as a means of enhancing student interest in and learning of history (Damico, Baildon, & Greenstone, 2010; Freeman & Levstik, 1988; Lombard, 1996; Richards, 2006; Turk, Klein, & Dickstein, 2007). Children’s literature is said to promote empathy (Brooks, 2009; Brophy, 1999; Houser, 1999; Kelley, 2008; Levstik & Barton, 2005; Rowell, Goodkind, & Henshaw, 1999), and biographies are noted as helpful in developing student understanding of history when used in context (Fertig, 2008) and developing multiple perspectives (Morgan, 2009; Zarnowski, 2004).

There are many books available for use in the social studies curriculum (Galda, 1991; Krey, 1998). Thousands of new titles are published for children each year, and the abundance of literature can make the selection process daunting. Indeed, some contend

that *every* book could be used to teach social studies (Libresco, Balantic, & Kipling, 2011). Annotated book lists are published by professional organizations, including the Children's Book Council (CBC) and the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). The CBC and the NCSS make joint book recommendations in the annual Notable Trade Books for Social Studies (typically found in a spring issue of the NCSS journal, *Social Education*). Such resources for the selection of children's literature are available but the extent to which teachers make curriculum and literature decisions based on these lists has not been studied.

Based on classroom observations and conversations with teachers, McGowan and Guzzetti (1991) outlined a rationale for using trade books in social studies, to supplant or supplement the textbook. They suggested five ways that trade books enhance instruction:

1. Variety – Providing trade books of various reading levels can help students find texts they can read comfortably.
2. Interest – Trade books are usually engaging and enjoyable.
3. Comprehensibility – Trade books can go in-depth and build connections between concepts.
4. Relevance – Trade books can provide real-world examples familiar to students.
5. Citizenship – Trade books can help students learn to think and read critically by providing different points of view.

Alleman and Brophy (1994) held that carefully selected children's literature can be used to teach social studies effectively. In later work Brophy and Alleman (2007) caution that some literature selections inserted in social studies textbooks may lean more

to language arts lessons than social studies and may present trivial content. They outline seven ideas that teachers should keep in mind as they evaluate literature for its potential to address significant social studies (p. 217). They advise that teachers should determine whether the literature:

1. Matches the social studies goals for the lesson and unit
2. Provides sufficient value to justify the social studies time allotted for it
3. Is of appropriate length for adequate sense-making
4. Enhances meaning and does not trivialize the content
5. Reflects authenticity and promotes understanding of the content
6. Enriches social studies understanding and promotes language arts
7. Avoids misconceptions, shallow interpretations, or stereotypes

### **Research Regarding the Use of Children’s Literature in Primary Social Studies**

Research studies regarding the use of children’s literature in primary social studies can be categorized by the literary formats or genres utilized in the studies (picture books with narrative fiction or nonfiction and informational texts) and by the literary or literacy practices they utilize (reading aloud, reader response, and literacy instruction). Four research studies that focused on the primary grades are considered in detail below (Levstik & Yessin, 1990; Macken, 2003; Osborne, 1995; Williams et al., 2007).

#### **Format: Picture Books**

The predominant book format utilized in the primary grades is the picture book, which includes visual images (pictures, photographs, or graphic art) that are integral to understanding the text. Many advocate the use of picture books in social studies because

they can help students understand concepts in ways that textbooks cannot (Sandmann & Ahern, 1997). Picture books may help highlight commonalities and differences (Marshall, 1999) or social consciousness (Owens & Nowell, 2001). They can help young children understand past times (Chick, 2006; Harms & Lettow, 1993, 1994) and develop other social studies concepts (Farris & Fuhler, 1994).

Sipe (2000, 2008) studied the responses of primary-grade children to storybooks with pictures; he held that the illustrations were integral to the children making meaning from the text. Sipe found that children made analytical, intertextual, and personal responses to the text and images that teachers shared. These categories were utilized as starting points for the analysis of findings in my study as participants in my pilot study used similar responses to those found by Sipe.

The fictional storybook format is prevalent in the primary grades, but picture books can also be nonfiction or informational texts; at times the format is a hybrid of storybook and informational, which takes advantage of the popularity of the story structure. The storybook format was prevalent in the six nonfiction picture books used in an action research study of second graders learning geography concepts (Macken, 2003). The teacher-researcher found that students developed an understanding of the five themes of geography after they listened to read alouds of the six texts, discussed key ideas, and connected the texts to activities. Macken stressed that careful selection of texts is essential and that teachers need to utilize social studies standards when choosing books.

## **Genres: Fiction, Nonfiction and Informational Text**

Picture books are written as both fiction and nonfiction, often in a narrative format. Narrative prose, often fictional, provides a storyline that carries a plot to resolution, and children who have been read to develop a strong familiarity with this structure (Bakken & Whedon, 2005; Levstik & Pappas, 1992).

Picture books may also be written as informational text, often with characteristic features such as a table of contents, an index, headings, and a glossary. Informational texts present nonfiction in a format to convey information to address students' questions about the natural and social world. Research indicates that reading with the intention of purposefully addressing students' questions can lead to higher achievement and motivation (Guthrie et al., 1996). Additionally, building background knowledge is important to text comprehension (Pressley, 2005). Even with evidence of such benefits, surveys and observations show that narrative texts dominate elementary classrooms, with very little time spent with informational texts (Duke, 2000a; Yopp & Yopp, 2006). Caswell and Duke (1998) estimate that 90% of texts children encounter are narratives. Research shows that only six percent of read alouds involve informational texts (Dreher, 2003).

Literacy research shows that a balanced approach, offering opportunities to interact with both narrative texts and informational texts, improves both achievement and motivation (Dreher, 2003; Duke, 2000b). Educators have long advocated for the inclusion of informational texts in early literacy programs (Hiebert, 1991; Pappas, 1991), and research has shown that early and continuous experience with informational texts helps to

build understanding of the world by developing background knowledge and vocabulary, both of which are important to academic success (Duke, 2000b). A study of first-grade classrooms, however, found that only 3.6 minutes per day were spent on informational texts; this dropped to an average of 1.4 minutes in districts with low-socioeconomic status (Duke, 2000a) where students also have less opportunity to engage with informational texts at home (Dreher, 2003). These studies may indicate a reluctance of primary teachers to use informational text. Based on the importance of incorporating informational texts in the primary grades, I wanted to see how teachers read this type of book as compared to a storybook, so I chose to include one informational text and two narrative fiction books, in the more familiar storybook format, for the present study.

Levstik and Yessin (1990) studied first graders learning history primarily through nonfiction historical texts. Yessin taught history in her first grade classroom through reading and discussion, emphasizing personal response. Together with Levstik, she analyzed her practice and they concluded that the teacher could promote young students' historical understanding by focusing on several key functions: selecting quality literature, reading the text aloud, leading discussions, providing explanations of historical context, and providing opportunities for personal response. This is one of the few studies focused on primary-grade students and nonfiction social studies texts.

### **Genre: Historical Fiction**

Historical fiction is a common genre in children's literature. Galda and Cullinan (2006) say that "reading historical fiction is like listening to a grandmother's stories," and it relates to students' own lives by helping "children see their home with new eyes" (p.

213). Several studies have documented that historical fiction is received well by students and that they can learn historical content through these texts (e.g., Levstik, 1986, 1989). However, historical fiction can create confusion in young children, who may believe that characters or events are real (Brabham, Boyd, & Edgington, 2000). Even older students may not question the accuracy of historical fiction (Levstik, 1989). It has also been found that some students believe historical fiction more than nonfiction – perhaps because the stories seem more real (Levstik, 1986; Wineburg, 1991).

Brophy and Alleman (2007) suggest that authentic literature can and should be incorporated into social studies units if they support social studies educational goals, but they warn that “fanciful stories or folklore selections usually belong in language arts rather than social studies, even if they have some relevance to the social studies unit topic” (p. 289). Realistic historical fiction may be included, but teachers should discuss the distinction of fact and fiction.

Based on this research, I purposefully avoided both historical fiction and nonfiction in the present study, although the informational text did have some historic content. Using either historical fiction or nonfiction would provide a skewed focus on social studies content; realistic fiction with a narrative format was chosen for two of the texts and the third was an informational text that did not have typical text features and had illustrations instead of photographs.

### **Literacy Practice: Reading Aloud**

Literacy practice is another way to categorize research on using children’s literature to teach social studies. Reading aloud in elementary classrooms is a research-

based practice used to foster both cognitive and affective literacy goals (Beck & McKeown, 2001; Hoffman, Roser, & Battle, 1993). Research has found that reading aloud can motivate young students to want to read, develop language skills, and foster literary understanding (Barrentine, 1996; Brabham et al., 2000). Reading aloud to students can also build content knowledge and abstract thinking skills (Neumann, 2009). A read aloud of a good book, followed by substantive discussion, can nurture enthusiasm and interest in a wide range of subjects (McCarty, 2004), as well as increase comprehension and vocabulary (Santoro, Chard, Howard, & Baker, 2008).

The teacher reading aloud can overcome the limitations of the students' reading level; texts with more substantial content can be shared with students who can understand them by listening and discussing, if not by reading (Beck & McKeown, 2001). Four studies focused on reading aloud as the method of delivery of the literature used to teach social studies; all four found that students responded positively (Brophy, 1992; Howe, 1990; Penn, 2000; Ramos, 2003). These studies, however, focused on upper elementary grades, not grades K-2. Teachers read text aloud in the four research studies that focused on the primary grades (Levstik & Yessin, 1990; Macken, 2003; Osborne, 1995; Williams et al., 2007) but descriptions of this practice were extremely limited with no details related to how the read alouds were planned or implemented.

Details of the planning process are considered in the current study where teachers were asked how they would utilize the three selected texts. Each teacher in the study indicated that they would conduct read alouds with two of the three picture books (three participants would not read the informational text aloud but others would), and they

described details of what they plan to do with the texts (some actually simulated the read aloud process). This provides a needed perspective on the perceptions and intent of teachers as they plan to read aloud with children, something missing from the literature.

### **Literary Practice: Reader Response**

Reader response considers the response of the reader to text and the meaning that is negotiated by the reader, rather than fixed in the text. Individual readers may take away different meanings from the same text, based on their background experiences and the stance they take as they approach a text (Rosenblatt, 1995). This stance may range from the efferent, where information is the focus, to the aesthetic, which focuses more on appreciation and enjoyment of text. Teachers may play important roles in the development of reader stance in their students when they ask them to seek information or encourage them to read for enjoyment (Galda & Liang, 2003; Levstik, 1989).

In the current study, the approaches of the participant teachers were analyzed for patterns in how they respond to texts and what they want their students to get out of the texts. One of the five major categories of coded comments was Reader Response/Literary Appreciation, which included such approaches as making text-to-self connections, evaluating the text, or appreciating the images. These were considered separately from a focus on Literacy Skill development.

### **Literacy Instruction**

Bringing social studies texts into literacy instruction is a way to incorporate authentic literature and is viewed by some scholars as a way to preserve some social studies in the elementary curriculum (Hicks, 1996; Hinde, 2005, 2009; Kent & Simpson,

2008). Elementary teachers are often crunched for time to meet accountability demands, and they may incorporate books with social studies themes into their reading instruction time to cover two subjects at once (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008; Haas & Laughlin, 2001; Parker, 2009; Sunal & Sunal, 2007-8). They may bring social studies literature (including historical fiction, biographies, and informational texts) to their reading groups or read it aloud to the whole class (Levstik & Yessin, 1990; Osborne, 1995); they may bring it in for genre studies or encourage students to independently read texts based on their interests (Howe, 1990). Although many teachers (including those in the present study) see integration as an effective way to incorporate the social studies in the elementary curriculum, Alleman and Brophy (1993, 1994) warn that it can shortchange the social studies.

Using literature to teach social studies may address skills important for literacy and for social studies (Levstik, 1986; Kent & Simpson, 2008; Roser & Keehn, 2002). Literacy skills may not directly relate to social studies content knowledge, but they are important components of procedural knowledge and affective growth that support students' thinking skills and critical thinking (Duplass, 2007). The NCSS (1994) recognizes that literacy skills, such as reading to get literal and inferential meaning, detecting cause and effect relationships, distinguishing between fact and opinion, and using literature to enrich meaning, are essential for social studies.

Osborne (1995) studied second graders' class discussions about historical fiction and nonfiction read by their teacher during their literacy block. Students were found to empathize with historical figures and to make connections to their own lives. This case

study of one teacher was done over an entire school year with observations in the literacy block when historical literature was used. The researcher focused on the teacher's actions and how she used a whole language approach with literature integrated across the curriculum. Interactive reading of texts with open-ended questions and free-flowing discussion allowed students to respond naturally and in many different ways, including writing in their literature logs, discussing with small groups, using imagery from the literature in their writing, and role playing with the characters from their reading. Social studies was purposefully incorporated, and students were found to be engaged and able to "empathize with the characters in time and place" (p. 157). All students were able to access the literature regardless of reading ability because it was read aloud and discussed extensively (some read alouds and discussions lasted an hour).

Integrated instruction was also the focus of a study by Williams et al. (2007) who evaluated the use of a comprehension program to teach the cause-effect structure with researcher-designed paragraphs. All groups used read alouds and discussed the biographies and social studies information texts. There were 15 classroom teachers and 243 at-risk second-grade students randomly assigned to three experimental conditions: the first received the cause-effect instruction with the content, the second read the content only, and the third received no instruction. The two content groups had the same content achievement, which the researchers suggested indicates that literacy instruction does not have to take away from content acquisition.

Another study (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008) produced very different results than Osborne (1995) and Williams et al. (2007). The study focused on teachers in 13 K-6

schools who said they were using literature to teach social studies. However, researchers found that most were doing literacy lessons rather than focusing on social studies content. The teachers asked students for low-level comprehension responses such as who did what and when. They developed little discussion about why something was done. They also did not make connections to social studies concepts that could have broadened the students' understanding. The teachers were familiar with developing reading skills such as decoding, fluency, and retelling the story. They focused on some informational facts in the story, but they did not seem to be adept at developing understanding of the social studies ideas in the story. The teachers had students analyze the story to determine the characters, the setting, the sequence of events, and the main idea; they tended not to synthesize, evaluate, or critique any social studies aspects of the story. The literature provided a literacy lesson with content taught only to explain context; texts with social studies themes became primarily vehicles for learning reading skills with content learning happening incidentally, rather than by design. Using social studies content as a vehicle to develop literacy skills as a means of "teaching smarter" may actually devalue social studies by promoting fragmented and insignificant content (Alleman & Brophy, 1993, 1994; Boyle-Baise et al., 2008).

Sunal and Sunal (2007-8) analyzed the reports of 60 preservice elementary teachers during their practicum teaching time in schools in Alabama. The preservice teachers were to report on the social studies they observed in the field. Of the 39 preservice teachers in grades K-3, many indicated that there was no time for social studies and that their cooperating teachers felt justified in spending time on reading and

math because these subjects were more essential than social studies. The stories in the reading series provided topics for social studies; some examples provided by the preservice teachers were that when a reading is on a historic figure or topic, like Ben Franklin, it is social studies or if the reading has to do with taking a trip and the class looks at a map, it also is social studies. Sunal and Sunal (2007-8) describe this as “a disarticulated, patchwork social studies curriculum that cannot consistently address the national standards” (p. 44). The emphasis on the reading series as the source of social studies topics was prevalent in grades K-3, with social studies textbook usage starting in grade 4. Many integration efforts were found to focus on “reading and language arts ideas” (p. 37). One cooperating teacher advised her preservice teacher to “look at a unit and try to stick in some social studies...then, you call it an integrated unit, and it kind of is one” (p. 38). There were teachers who tried to teach meaningful social studies, including one teacher who used social studies units she had previously developed (including additional literature) to supplement the reading series and actually labeled the unit boxes “with the names of the stories in the reader” to satisfy “the reading coaches who check up on teachers” (p. 39).

Leming, Ellington, and Schug (2006) surveyed elementary (grades 2 and 5) and middle school (grade 8) classrooms to document that less than four hours a week of social studies occurred in these schools. Over half of the schools reported that social studies was integrated with language arts but this was done by using themes from the literacy program rather than the social studies standards.

## **Influences on Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Social Studies Education**

The research on the use of children's literature to teach social studies indicates that social studies can be effectively taught using children's literature. There are institutional constraints that may limit the time that elementary teachers have to spend on social studies, but there are many children's books available that can support the teaching of social studies. Whether or not social studies is taught well in the primary grades may depend not only on the resources and time available, but also on the individual teacher's perception of social studies education. As the gatekeeper of what actually is taught in the classroom (Thornton, 2005), the perceptions and experiences of the elementary teacher may determine whether the teacher utilizes children's literature to teach significant social studies or not. The perspectives of the elementary teachers toward social studies may be linked to three major influences: (1) background and experience, (2) teacher preparation and professional development, and, (3) the perceived purpose of social studies.

### **Importance of Background and Experience**

An in-depth analysis of teacher education research is beyond the scope of this review, but there are salient points related to the study at hand. Specifically, it is important to consider the background and experiences of elementary teachers as they relate to their perceptions of social studies. Some researchers contend that teachers often teach as they were taught (Lortie, 2002), but the preparation of elementary social studies teachers is more complicated than learning by observation (Skelar, 1998). According to Schell and Fisher (2007), typical experiences in elementary school social studies include reading textbooks to recall information, completing fun projects, or not doing social

studies at all. If these are the prevalent experiences elementary teachers had as students and they are utilized as the basis of their teaching of social studies, they can perpetuate insignificant or trivial social studies instruction. This would discount the potential of growth and change, as well as the experiences outside of the classroom that teach us about social studies concepts.

Johnston (1990) and Skelar (1998) contend that in addition to the influence of their own school experience, teachers are influenced by their backgrounds, personalities, and personal histories including their teacher preparation, content courses, and interactions with students. Brophy (1992) held that elementary teachers who are well versed in social education can teach social studies for understanding and higher-order applications. Levstik and Yessin (1990), Macken (2003), and Osborne (1995) portrayed three different elementary teachers, each of whom had an interest in social studies, and found that the teachers helped students develop social studies understanding through the use of children's literature. This has been borne out in an examination of a classroom teacher's practice in teaching the big ideas of social studies, which included the use of children's literature (Alleman, Knighton, & Brophy, 2010; Brophy & Alleman, 2009).

### **Teacher Preparation and Professional Development**

Teacher preparation programs have had little focus on social studies content at the elementary level, and the requirements have markedly decreased in the past three decades. In 1983, Farmer found that of 223 colleges and universities with undergraduate teacher programs, all required a course in history but less than 18 credit hours in the social sciences were required. In 1993, Bennett studied 139 elementary teacher education

programs, finding that while most required courses in history, few courses in the social sciences were required. A task force report on social studies in Maryland (Stack & Burke, 2010) held that inconsistency in teacher preparation programs, particularly at the elementary level, results in various levels of social studies content background which is difficult to compare. As noted by the task force report, most preparation programs require three to four reading courses and two math courses; some require only a half-semester of social studies methods, and others share the course with science methods (Stack & Burke, 2010). I did an Internet survey of requirements of seven institutions of higher education in one of the states that this study was conducted in, and found that three of the seven schools surveyed required a history course but the others provided options in the humanities and social sciences (see Appendix A). While most schools in all the studies required a form of social studies methods, some combined these efforts with the fine arts, literacy programs, and “thematic studies” (undefined).

The issue becomes a lack of standardized content knowledge, and this may be a source of discrepancy in how elementary teachers approach social studies. The four core areas of elementary social studies include history, citizenship/government, geography, and economics (NCSS, 1994). For teachers with degrees in elementary education, the number of social studies content courses taken is often limited to one or two survey courses. Literacy, on the other hand, is taught in multiple courses; some teacher preparation programs even integrate language arts and social studies methods, where “novices may not realize that major social studies concepts must be well taught as social

studies concepts and may not always be well taught when addressed only as a topic for a writing exercise or through a set of children's literature" (Sunal & Sunal, 2007-8, p. 31).

Some preservice teachers may have taken a course or two in history or geography, while a few may have had a course in political science or economics. In one study, student teachers who had a limited background in history were noncommittal about the utility of social studies methods classes (Yeager & Davis, 1994). VanFossen (2005) found one reason for the neglect of elementary social studies in some Indiana schools was that teachers lacked a "clear understanding of the goals and mission of the social studies at the K-5 level" (p. 377).

Another issue is the lack of social studies that preservice teachers observe in field placements. A study of preservice teachers' field experiences found that little social studies was being taught in the elementary classrooms observed, providing few opportunities for the future teachers to see social studies instruction in actual classrooms (Sunal & Sunal, 2007-8). The preservice teachers' observations found a mix of in-service teacher practices related to social studies teaching through literature: Some teachers only used the social studies topics found in the reading series, others superficially integrated social studies, and one teacher even hid her social studies materials from the "reading coaches who check up on teachers" (p. 39). Other teachers, however, were found to not teach social studies at all, stating that "it is just too boring" or that "there is just too much other important material that has to be taught" (p. 36) One preservice teacher reported that her cooperating teacher said, "You can't do much else besides read in social studies. So, we are going to work on the reading instead" (p. 36).

In-service efforts to increase the efficacy of elementary social studies teaching have been successful (Alleman et al., 2010; Hartman, 2009). Teachers with a strong background in social education can and do teach significant social studies in the elementary classroom (Alleman et al., 2010; Brophy, 1992). However, in-service learning to increase social studies content understanding may be limited. In a national survey of professional development programs, researchers found that from 2004 to 2008, fewer teachers participated in content-related development opportunities but professional development in reading instruction increased (Darling-Hammond, Wei, & Adamson, 2010). The Maryland task force report on the status of social studies found that “just half of the elementary teachers responsible for social studies content participate in high-quality professional development” (Stack & Burke, 2010, p. 38). Professional development in the Maryland task force report included (1) graduate courses, (2) workshops, institutes and academies, (3) coaching or mentoring programs, (4) job-embedded professional development activities, and (5) conferences professional meetings (Stack & Burke, 2010, p. 39).

### **The Perceived Purpose of Social Studies**

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) states that the “aim of social studies is the promotion of civic competence—the knowledge, intellectual purposes, and democratic dispositions required of students to be active and engaged participants in public life” (NCSS, 2010, p. 3). This purpose of teaching social studies may elude the elementary teacher as few have defined a purpose for teaching the subject (Skelar, 1998) and many see it only as history and geography, rather than an integrated subject that cuts

across many different areas (Brophy & Alleman, 1993; Goodlad, 2004; Passe, 2007). Researchers have found that elementary social studies methods teaching has been hindered by negative past experiences, a lack of interest, and limited exposure to social studies teaching in preservice field placements (Haas & Laughlin, 2001). Other research has identified social studies as the least liked and the least taught of all the subjects (Goodlad, 1984; Stodolsky, Salk, & Glaessner, 1991), with students seeing little relevance or value in the subject (Zhao & Hoge, 2005). However, there does not seem to be a clear understanding about how practitioners give meaning and purpose to social studies and how this influences classroom practice (Adler, 1984). Indeed, measuring student and teacher attitudes toward elementary social studies may be hampered by misunderstandings about what the subject is. For example, students in one study where language arts was integrated with social studies may not have considered reading social studies literature as social studies (Guzzetti et al., 1992). Chapin (2006) held that elementary teachers and students do not “really dislike social studies” (p. 187) but they have not made connections to their future or present social participation in their school, community, and the world. A case study of an elementary preservice teacher found that personal perspectives and the enacted curriculum in the classroom had little to do with how the subject was envisioned in the college methods course (Goodman & Adler, 1985).

The think-aloud task in this study recorded what teachers focused on as they read three picture books with social studies content. This focus is an indication of what they think is important (Chi, 1997). These responses, as well as discussion about teaching

social studies and the rank order task on the questionnaire, helped articulate their perceptions and attitudes toward this content area.

### **Implications of the Literature Reviewed**

The studies examined here provide a foundation for understanding how children's literature may be used to promote significant social studies learning experiences. When considered with the theoretical framework and the readings on elementary social studies, the research leads to two major conclusions: (1) children's literature can be used to support both literacy and social studies goals and (2) purposeful planning by the teacher can determine if meaningful social studies is taught or not. After consideration of these implications, I describe limitations of the current study and how I envision this research contributing to the literature.

#### **Children's Literature Can Support Both Literacy and Social Studies Goals**

The majority of the studies involving the use of social studies trade books in literacy instruction indicate that this practice can address both literacy and social studies goals. Researchers have found that students generally like the use of trade books. Howe (1995) and Levstik (1986) showed that historical fiction could help develop reader response to literature and historical understanding. Smith et al. (1992) found that historical fiction could teach historical content and increase student interest in reading. Williams et al. (2007) showed that specific literacy skill development did not take away from content learning, indicating that both could be done simultaneously.

The findings of these four studies support the use of literature to address both literacy and social studies goals, but a study by Boyle-Baise et al. (2008) study found that

social studies learning happened by chance when social studies texts were used with literacy instruction. The difference may be in the purposeful and planned use of social studies texts evident in the former and absent in the classrooms observed by Boyle-Baise et al. Sunal and Sunal (2007-8) also found that in-service teachers relied on the reading series, seen as integrated with social studies content, as the primary means of teaching social studies in grades K-3, so it may be the resources available to the teachers that determine the social studies learning in the classroom.

### **Purposeful Planning**

Research suggests that the purposes the teacher sets for reading a text can determine what students get out of the text (Osborne, 1995; Penn, 2000; VanSledright & Kelly, 1998). The students' responses to the text may be limited by the teacher's positioning signals that suggest the stance students should take as they read a text (Galda & Liang, 2003). Levstik (1986) contends that research on the important issues of student response to social studies text and the role of the teacher in positioning response cannot be answered through "traditional empirical models" but needs "to include focus on the range of evidence available through naturalistic inquiry" (p. 2).

Many scholars contend that children's literature needs to be carefully selected for specific social studies content, not just literary value, in order to promote meaningful social studies (Alleman & Brophy, 1994; Crocco, 2006; Levstik & Barton, 2005; Stewart, 2007). Few studies consider how teachers select social studies texts (Heubach, 1998; Howe, 1990; Macken, 2003; Osborne, 1995). Finding out how teachers make text selections and what they would like to have in order to make effective choices may point

to the need for better resources to purposefully design social studies lessons with children's literature (such as text features, book reviews, colleague's recommendations, or professional development in content area literacy).

The majority of the studies examined for this review focused on how children's literature could be used to support social studies, utilizing reading materials and procedures selected by the researcher. Few studies looked at the authentic or typical practices of teachers (Heubach, 1998; Howe, 1990; Levstik & Yessin, 1990; Osborne, 1995). Naturalistic studies shed light on what is actually happening in classrooms to see how teachers select, plan, and utilize children's literature to teach social studies and how students respond to such. This study is not naturalistic in the classic sense of observing what teachers do in their own classroom but is authentic to the extent that teachers were asked to respond to a typical activity—reviewing and planning to use picture books in their own primary classrooms.

The present study sought to develop understanding about how teachers in the primary grades plan to use children's literature with social studies content by recording responses to see whether they focus on social studies, literacy, or literary goals (or other). The elementary teacher's purpose for the literature is a key element in its effective usage for promoting social studies. If elementary teachers usually look at literature from a literacy or literary perspective, it would be helpful to know what it would take to get them to also look at literature from a social studies perspective.

### **Contributions of the Current Study**

Few studies are available that consider the development of social studies in the early elementary grades and fewer look at the development of social studies understanding through the use of literature. However, many elementary teachers utilize literature to teach social studies. Alleman and Brophy (1994) held that using children's literature to promote significant social studies needs to be done in a purposeful way. Children's literature may be useful to teach early elementary social studies but there is little supporting research from the social studies field aside from a handful of studies (Levstik & Yessin, 1990; Macken, 2003; Osborne, 1995; Williams et al., 2007). More studies are available in upper elementary grades where most students are reading. Literacy practice and reading research, such as that using read alouds, think alouds, information texts, and reader response, may provide ideas of how to utilize children's literature effectively to develop meaningful social studies in the early elementary classroom.

The present study explored how 27 teachers in the primary grades view social studies as seen through their think-aloud comments and responses to interview questions. Previous studies have shown that students can learn social studies from children's literature but that teachers are not using it effectively. Absent from the research are the voices of the teachers themselves, saying what they would do if they could and explaining why they do what they do. In studying the different responses of these teachers, I attempt to ascertain the extent to which these teachers focus on social studies

content as they plan to read children's literature, and to describe their perceptions of teaching social studies in the primary grades.

### **Chapter Summary and Conceptual Framework**

The literature in this review deals with the writings, research, and theory related to children's literature and social studies, literary theory and literacy practices, and how elementary teachers teach social studies with children's literature. Based on this review, I developed a conceptual framework (Maxwell, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994) to outline how the elements may influence an elementary teacher's perception of using literature to teach social studies (see Figure 2.1 at the end of this chapter). This conceptual framework divides influential factors into individual, institutional, and textual/literary factors.

*Individual factors* relate to constructivist theory—that the meanings individuals construct are unique and come from their experiences, background knowledge, and understandings. Patterns related to individual factors were identified in the initial questionnaire and subsequent interview data. These factors may affect what teachers focus on when they read a book to students or whether they even recognize the significance of the social studies content.

*Institutional factors* focus on the low status of the social studies in the primary grades. These can be linked to social constructionist theory, which holds that our culture shapes the way that we see things. In the case of elementary social studies, the culture of the school or district may place a premium on other curriculum, such as literacy and math, or even co-curricular subjects like art, physical education, and music, leaving teachers with little time in the daily schedule to devote to social studies. Accountability

measures further exacerbate the marginalization of elementary social studies; time, resources, and energies are devoted to reading and math to prepare for high-stakes testing. Curriculum demands, such as the reading program used, or curriculum constraints, such as the absence of a curriculum or time in the schedule, may limit the amount of social studies done in the primary grades. Moreover, access to different types of text for teaching various social studies concepts may also limit some teachers.

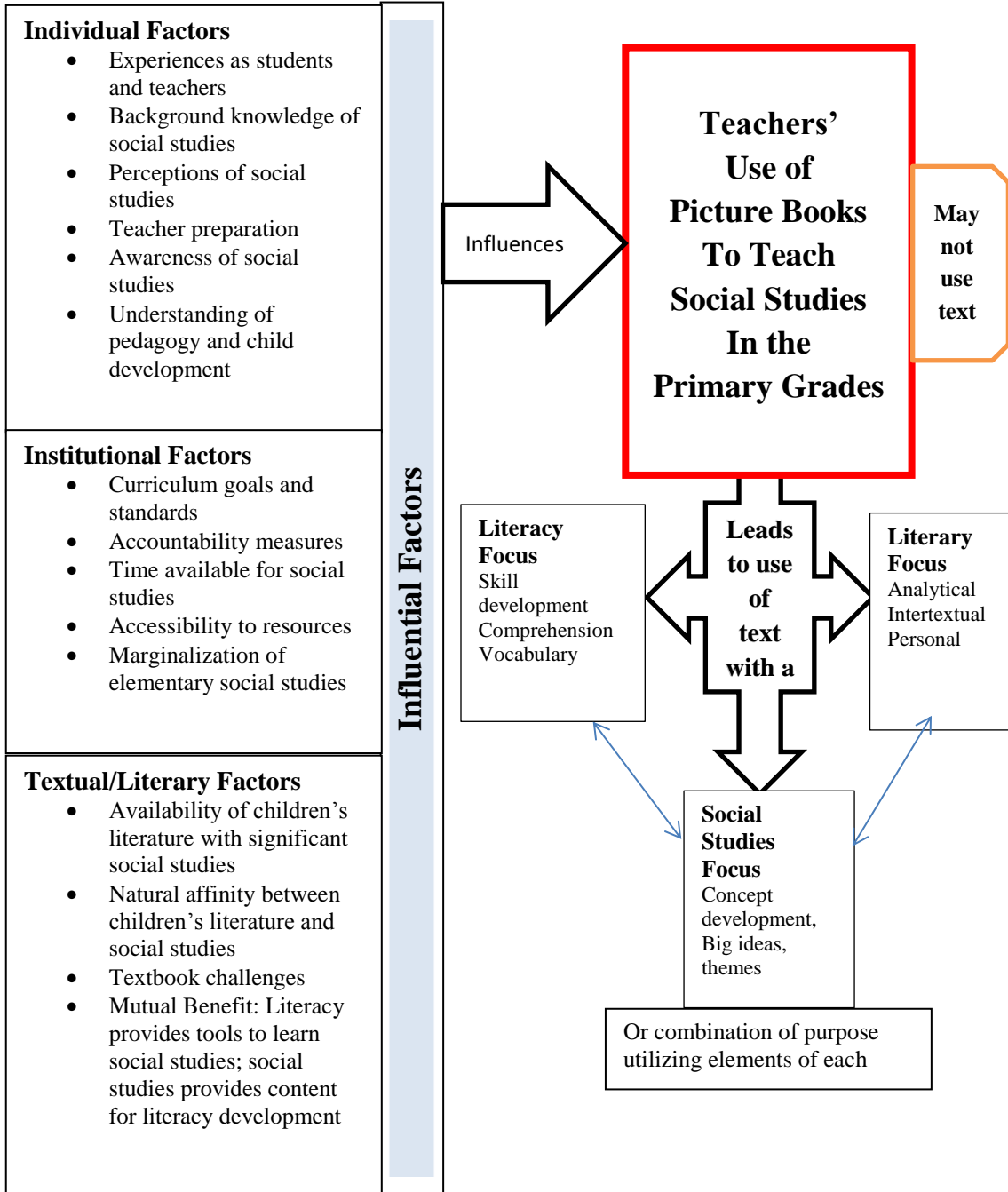
*Textual and literary factors* include the natural affinity of literature and the social studies and the challenges of the textbook. There have been thousands of picture books published in the past two decades, many of which could be used to teach social studies concepts (Libresco et al., 2011). The integrative use of children's literature in social studies is a long-standing practice as teachers appreciate that children can learn social studies from literature and it can supplement a problematic textbook. While traditional efforts focused on the development of social studies understanding, the more recent emphasis has been on using the social studies content to further literacy skill development. By incorporating children's literature with social studies themes, teachers may hope to keep some form of social studies in the primary curriculum. How teachers use the different types of texts and the stance that they take as they read texts to students may position how students receive and learn from the texts.

These are some of the factors that may influence the primary teacher's perceptions of using children's literature to do social studies. This study sought to examine how teachers in the primary grades approach or focus on children's literature with significant social studies concepts and to find patterns from the influential factors on

the teachers. In the next chapter, details of the research methods are discussed. Findings are outlined in Chapters 4, 5 and 6; discussion of the findings is found in Chapter 7, and conclusions and recommendations are outlined in Chapter 8.

Figure 2.1

Graphic Depiction of Conceptual Framework



## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods of Inquiry**

This chapter describes the study design and research methods. In this study, I explored with 27 primary-grade teachers their perceptions of teaching social studies with children's literature. Teachers were interviewed individually and asked to read three picture books, thinking aloud about how they would use the books in their curriculum; students were not included in this study. I used a qualitative approach using think-aloud research methods (van Someren, Barnard, & Sandberg, 1994) to address the research questions. Verbal analysis (Chi, 1997), integrating qualitative and quantitative measures, was used to analyze the data.

### **Research Questions**

I sought to better understand the practice of using children's literature to teach social studies. Following are the three research questions that guided my study:

1. What do teachers in the primary grades focus on when previewing children's literature with social studies content?
2. What planning processes do teachers in the primary grades utilize as they preview children's literature for use in teaching social studies?
3. What factors do teachers perceive influence their teaching of social studies in the primary grades?

Details in this chapter include the research design, data collection methods, the research sample, and data analysis methods. This chapter also contains a description of a

pilot study used to validate the interview protocol. I also discuss issues of trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

### **Research Design**

This qualitative study explored how teachers read children's literature with social studies content in the primary curriculum, focusing on the planning process, using think-aloud research methods (van Someren et al., 1994), and verbal analysis (Chi, 1997). The research sample for this study included 27 purposefully-selected (Patton, 1990) teachers in the primary grades from 10 suburban and rural communities of a large metro area in the upper Midwest. Three data-collection methods were utilized: a demographic and interest questionnaire, think-aloud protocols, and semi-structured interviews. I analyzed the data with respect to the conceptual framework, the research questions, and previous literature. Validity was enhanced by employing various methods of data collection and analysis, including triangulation of data and sources. Subsequent chapters address the findings, discussion, and conclusions with both narrative and visual modeling.

Qualitative research methodology provides the most appropriate means to gain insight into how primary grade teachers read children's literature. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) advise, "Qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional methods" (p. 11). Qualitative research design is interactive and recursive, with the various components identified initially but modified as new developments are encountered (Maxwell, 2005). Qualitative data include the verbal

reports and observable actions of a small number of individuals, which are then used to find patterns that help make sense of a problem or situation.

The first purpose of this study was to explore the different approaches of primary-grade teachers as they read children's literature with social studies content. A qualitative approach enabled individual teachers to express the meaning and understanding that they made as they read each book, with constructivist recognition that individuals are influenced by their background experiences.

The second purpose of this study was to examine the primary-grade teachers' perceptions of teaching social studies. These perceptions may come from the social and cultural surroundings of the teachers, reflecting a social constructionist perspective, as well as the background and experiences of each teacher.

The think-aloud method and the semi-structured interview questions were outlined in advance, but also allowed for probing and follow-up questions tailored to an individual's specific response. A prestructured qualitative design (Miles & Huberman, 1994), with "an explicit conceptual framework, a rather precise set of research questions, and a clearly defined sampling plan" (p. 84) was utilized because I was seeking input from a variety of sources at several different sites.

### **The Research Sample**

Patton (2002) said, "Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources" (p. 244). I began my planning with a sampling strategy that carefully considered all such aspects. However—as is often the

case with empirical research—I was unable to follow my original plan when I was not given access to the schools I had planned to use. After being denied access at five school districts, I turned to a snowball sampling process (Patton, 1990) of contacting key informants in various elementary schools within my commuting radius.

### **The Settings**

Teachers were recruited from 14 different schools across a major metropolitan area of the upper Midwest, including 10 communities and seven school districts in two states. The schools were located in communities classified as large suburbs, town fringe, rural fringe, and distant town locales by the National Center for Education Statistics. These classifications describe both how far a community is from a city center as well as the size of the community. The categories are defined and notated in Appendix B; the chart there also notes the pseudonyms used for the communities, the school districts, and the schools; the level of students eligible for Free or Reduced-price Lunch (F/RL), which is often used as an indicator of the affluence of a community; and the percentage of White students in the school district, as a measure of diversity. The range of F/RL is from 4 to 34%. There were two private academies (K-8) represented, neither of which participated in a subsidized school lunch program; both schools do offer need-based scholarships, but the families of most students pay the full tuition of the academies. The communities represent a range of locations but there is little diversity within the communities; the percentage of White students at the 14 schools ranged from 79% to 98% (data from the National Center for Education Statistics). See Appendix B for brief descriptive data of the schools and communities.

The large suburbs (population more than 250,000) include Bayside, Hillside, Southside, and Westside; all the large suburbs end with “side” for ease of recognition of the type of community. Riverview, Clear View, and Lakeview are town fringe communities (within 10 miles of an urbanized center); these towns within sight of the large city were named with the ending of “view.” The rural fringe communities of Northfield and Eastfield encompass rural areas so they include “field” in their name; one distant town, Greenville, is 40 miles beyond the urbanized center and has the highest number of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (34%). Seven communities are in one state, where the major urban area is centered, and three communities (Greenville, Northfield, and Riverview) are located in an adjoining state, but still considered part of the same greater metropolitan area. Two school districts include multiple communities: Riverview School District includes Riverview and Northfield; Westside School District includes Clear View and Westside.

### **The Participants**

In consultation with members of my committee, I chose 27 participants as my sample size as this fits into a counterbalanced design (Krathwohl, 1993). Utilizing the sampling procedures of Miles and Huberman (1994), I established boundaries and a sampling frame. The boundaries of this study were to involve only 27 primary-grade teachers (K-2), with nine teachers per grade level, currently teaching in the metro area of the study. The grade-level limit addresses the research question and reflects the grades least studied by previous research (K-2). This stratified purposeful sampling was

combined with a chain sampling or snowball procedure (Patton, 1990) that was used to find the participants for this study (see recruitment discussion below).

The number participants provided a manageable number of responses over the three texts, and allowed for each book to be the first book read nine times. Using three books and alternating the order in which they were presented to the participants helped to counter possible bias due to text genre or grade level. The counterbalanced design allowed each book to be read by nine participants as either the first, second, or third book. This table shows the counterbalanced design, with the first figure indicating grade level, the second indicating the participant number, and the last number representing the order of the book read:

Table 3.1

*Counterbalanced Study Design*

<b>Kindergarten</b>	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
K.1.1	1.1.2	2.1.3
K.2.3	1.2.1	2.2.2
K.3.2	1.3.3	2.3.1
K.4.1	1.4.2	2.4.3
K.5.3	1.5.1	2.5.2
K.6.2	1.6.3	2.6.1
K.7.1	1.7.2	2.7.3
K.8.3	1.8.1	2.8.2
K.9.2	1.9.3	2.9.1

*Teacher Coding: Grade-Teacher-Group (1.1.2 = Grade 1, Teacher 1, Group 2)*

The teachers were assigned to one of the three groups in the order they were recruited. I assigned coded numbers to each participant to keep track of the interviews

using the chart in Table 3.1. To protect participants' anonymity, each participant picked a pseudonym to be used in this narrative.

The participants included 1 male and 26 female teachers. All had a bachelor's degree and 14 (52%) also held a master's degree. This is slightly above the national average found in a survey of public school teachers where 45% held a master's degree (Parsad et al., 2001). Most participants (22 of 27 [81%]), had an undergraduate major in elementary or early elementary education. The other undergraduate majors were in marketing, architecture, communication, home economics, and human development. All participants were licensed in the state where they taught, including the three teachers working in a private school (licensure is not required for private school teachers in the state). The range of years in the classroom was from 2 to 37 years, with an average of 12.3 years of teaching experience. I did not collect data on age, race or ethnicity. All participants appeared to be White teachers. From the interviews where some voluntarily said their age, I know that the youngest teacher (with two years of experience) was 24 years old and the two teachers with 37 years of experience each, were both almost 60. Profiles of the participants are outlined in Appendix C.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Data were collected from 27 participants through three methods: (1) a demographic/interest questionnaire, (2) a think-aloud procedure, and (3) a semi-structured interview. The following data collection table (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002) outlines a research question matrix which demonstrates how the research questions

(what is needed to know?), the issues (why is this important to know?), and the methods of collecting data (how is data gathered?) are related.

Table 3.2

*Research Questions Matrix*

<b>What do I need to know?</b>	<b>Why do I need to know this?</b>	<b>How do I gather the data?</b>
What do teachers in the primary grades focus on when previewing children’s literature with social studies content?	To gain an understanding of the content knowledge and priorities that guide teaching with children’s literature.  To confirm research studies of elementary social studies teaching practice.	Think-aloud method as teachers read 3 books  Verbal analysis of transcripts from think-aloud task
What planning processes do teachers in the primary grades utilize as they preview children’s literature for use in their classroom?	To gain an understanding of how teachers approach text and the procedures they utilize to process text.	Second verbal analysis of transcripts coded for procedures
What factors do teachers perceive influence their teaching of social studies in the primary grades?	To explore the influences of curriculum, standards, school district, or other factors on each participant’s teaching.	Verbal analysis of data from questionnaire, interview, and think-aloud task

**Questionnaire**

To gather demographic and interest information, I sent a two-page questionnaire (via email) to all teachers who agreed to be part of the study. The questionnaire used in this study included ten demographic items, four contextual questions about literacy practices, five open-ended questions regarding educational interests, two questions related to the number and types of texts in the teacher’s classroom library, and an

opportunity to rank order their preference for teaching various elementary subjects (see Appendix D). Information from the demographic items was used for comparative and descriptive purposes. The open-ended items and contextual questions about the classroom were designed to gather information about the teachers' literacy practices and the resources available to them. It was important that questions specific to social studies were *not* included in the questionnaire so as not to cue participants to the primary focus of the study and thereby compromise the reading of the first book read for the think-aloud task (no prompt to focus on social studies was given with the first book).

### **Think-Aloud Procedure**

The think-aloud procedure was chosen as the primary method for data collection in this study. Think-aloud protocols have been used in many reading studies to examine how readers process text to complete a task (Afflerbach, 2002; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995; van Someren et al., 1994). Often these studies have been with expert or novice readers using difficult texts with a comparison of the processes each used. Other think-alouds, where participants are asked to solve a problem or complete a task, begin with task analysis to determine a model response, and then make comparisons of the participants' responses to that model of how best to do the required task (van Someren et al., 1994). I adapted the process for this study; the task was for teachers to read picture books in anticipation of using the texts with their primary-grade students. There was no task analysis done and there was no model to judge the responses to. The participants would be considered as "expert" readers for this type of text; the emphasis was not on their reading ability or reading process but on the type of focus that participants had as

they read each text and on their planning process. The think-aloud method can be used to consider a variety of thought processes (Chi, 1997).

Ericsson and Simon (1993) held that the contents of short-term memory form the basis for verbal reports and that the think-aloud process does not take much training for participants. They suggested that participants be given a practice think-aloud task unrelated to the task they will be asked to perform. For this study, before I presented the texts, I intended to ask each participant to complete a simple addition problem in order to practice the think-aloud process. However, I soon found that the participants were comfortable with doing think alouds and they felt this practice was unnecessary. I did tell them that they would be reading three picture books and that their task was to think aloud as they look at each book, verbalizing how they could use each text in their curriculum. Participants were encouraged to say anything that came to mind as they read, but they were not given any specific prompts about when to comment.

The full think-aloud procedure is included in the beginning of the interview protocol (see Appendix E). Teachers were asked to read the first book and think aloud about how they might use the text within their primary curriculum. I used clarifying statements such as “Just say what you think you would focus on with your students. You can point out where you might ask a question or where you might bring something to their attention or explain something.” For the second and third books, participants were asked to also focus on how they would use the book to teach social studies. I rotated the presentation of the books in a counterbalanced manner as discussed above.

While participants were reading and thinking aloud, I used photocopied pages of each text to take notes; this allowed me to record participants' comments corresponding to specific pages in the text. Prior to copying the pages, I numbered the pages on a master copy of each text for ease of reference because the books had unnumbered pages (typical for children's picture books). Page numbers were coded for each book (A-B-C) so page two on Book A is A2. I used abbreviations of the statements as a cue to match the recorded statements with the image or text referred to as I transcribed interviews. In addition, participants were given sticky notes to record their ideas as they read each text. Many teachers use sticky notes in texts where they will make comments or pose a question. Only one participant used the sticky notes which were transferred after the think-aloud to the photocopies of each text and used as a part of the transcript.

**Text selection.** Three books were purposefully selected for use in the think-aloud tasks. Each book needed to be: (a) of noted literary quality, (b) topically related, (c) relevant to the primary curriculum, (d) age appropriate, (e) culturally diverse, (f) able to address at least one thematic strand of the NCSS standards, (g) accessible, and (h) appropriate for reading aloud. The three texts I presented to each participant were each at the primary (K-2) reading level and included social studies content. I altered the order in which the texts were presented to control for the effect of genre and content in a counterbalanced manner (Krathwohl, 1993; see Table 3.1).

Each text selected was from the Notable Social Studies Tradebooks for Young People listings, published annually by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) in cooperation with the Children's Book Council (CBC). Choosing books from

the Notables listing helped to ensure that the books were of noted literary and content quality, were culturally diverse, and addressed at least one thematic social studies strand, as these are the criteria for inclusion on the Notables list. This same listing designated all three selected texts as appropriate for the primary (grades K-2) reading level. While teacher choice may be an important factor in the effective use of literature to teach social studies, preselecting the texts allowed for comparison of participant responses. These texts also met the selection criteria of Cooper and Kiger (2009), who held that texts appropriate for reading aloud should be of literary quality, culturally and socially authentic, and appealing to students.

The three picture books chosen shared some social studies content such as food, markets, and wants and needs, as well as other thematic aspects (community, personal development, family, friendship, cooperation); such topics are relevant to the primary curriculum. All are included in national standards articulated by the NCSS (1994); personal development, friendship, and cooperation are not included in the K-3 state social studies standards where this study was conducted.

Two members of my committee consulted with me as I determined the number of texts to use in the study. Two of the texts are fiction, and the third is an informational text. Because teachers may easily pick up the social studies content from the informational text, the books were presented in a rotational manner per the counterbalanced design as outlined in Table 3.1. Each book (described below) was given a different letter label: Book A was *Daisy Comes Home* (Brett, 2002), Book B was *Grandpa's Corner Store* (DiSalvo-Ryan, 2000) and Book C was *Supermarket* (Krull,

2001). Each group received the books in a pre-determined order: Group 1, Books A-B-C; Group 2, Books B-C-A; and Group 3, Books C-A-B. Again, the counterbalanced design allowed each book to be read as the first, second, or third book, by three participants in each of the three grade levels.

*Daisy Comes Home* (Brett, 2002). This text, designated as Book A in the study design, is a fictional narrative about a hen who is bullied by the other hens in the henhouse. She has an adventure and winds up in the food market. Social studies ideas include relationships (including anthropomorphic bullying) and personal development (through chores and responsibilities), as well as economic concepts relating to food production and distribution (markets); a compare and contrast activity related to the food markets would foster meaningful social studies understanding. The cultural universals of food, family, money, and transportation, are ideas central to social studies in the primary grades. Although the story is set in China, the text does not emphasize the geographic concepts but the images reflect the locale. Literacy concepts that could be developed include sequence, compound words, onomatopoeia, and other vocabulary. Literary aspects may be analytical and intertextual, with a compare and contrast with other texts by the same author or with the same type of story. Literary elements might include a focus on the characters, setting, plot resolution, and predictions (particularly with the foreshadowing illustrations). The story might also evoke a personal response as the reader reacts to the plight of the characters, the vivid images, and the exciting text.

*Grandpa's Corner Store* (DiSalvo-Ryan, 2000). Book B in the study is another fictional narrative about a community that comes together to help the owner of a small

store facing closure after a bigger store moves to the neighborhood. Social studies concepts related to food, market economies, family, community, map making, and continuity and change, could be developed when reading this text. A subtext related to big business displacing small business is also present. The text could be used to compare and contrast small corner stores and large supermarkets. Literary elements might consider the feelings of the characters or text-to-self connections as well as personal responses to the story itself. Literacy concepts might focus on characters, setting, and plot development, or address comprehension strategies such as prediction, inference, and clarifying, as well as vocabulary development.

*Supermarket (Krull, 2001)*. The text designated as Book C in this study, is an informational text that takes students on a guided tour of the supermarket and provides information on historical and contemporary farms and stores. Social studies concepts embedded in the text include the food system (historical development, production, and distribution), choices, trade, and interdependence. Literacy skills might include making concept maps, developing a sequence, understanding informational text, and learning new vocabulary. A literary response might be analytical, intertextual, or personal as the reader makes connections to prior experiences and understandings.

### **Interview Protocol**

My research questions and conceptual framework formed the basis of the semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix E), which was conducted after the think-aloud procedure was completed with each participant. The interview questions were designed to learn about the teachers' perceptions of teaching social studies and their

classroom practices. Many offered comments about their curriculum and resources as they read the texts. Therefore, the interview questions were modified depending on what the participants said during the think-aloud procedure.

I asked the teachers if they thought the books were appropriate for the grade they taught and if they would use the books to teach social studies. Discussion followed about their social studies teaching and many commented on various aspects of their curriculum, schedule, and challenges that they faced. At the end of the interview, I explained to the participants that each of the texts read were taken from the NCSS Notable Tradebooks listing that listed the books for grades K-2. I asked about their familiarity with this professional organization and gave each a copy of *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, a NCSS practitioner publication for their professional development.

### **Pilot Study**

I was curious about how long it would take participants to complete the think-aloud task and about the appropriateness of my interview questions, so I conducted a pilot study with three licensed elementary teachers from varied backgrounds. One was a primary teacher with a literacy background, another has a background in English literature and history, and the third teacher has an interest in science and learning technology. Each participant in the pilot study read the three books and was able to think aloud throughout the process.

Two pilot study participants completed the tasks in less than an hour. The teacher with the English literature background, however, role-played the read aloud with each text, even waiting for my responses to his prompts and questions. He took 75 minutes to

complete the think-aloud task, including the read aloud and interaction. I took his response to the think-aloud task into consideration when scheduling interviews, since other teachers could have been inclined to read through as thoroughly as this participant (only one actually did).

The participants in the pilot study offered many comments, which fit into five categories: (1) descriptions, (2) literary merit, (3) literacy skills, (4) social studies understanding, and/or (5) developmental appropriateness. These topics formed the initial categories for the actual study but changed per the responses to (1) literacy skills, (2) reader response, (3) social studies, (4) descriptive responses, (5) other responses, and (6) curriculum discussion.

I adjusted the interview protocol following the pilot study and the proposal meeting with my committee, by asking participants to purposefully consider social studies for the last two books read, instead of just indicating how they would use all the books within the primary curriculum. This would ensure that the participants were aware of the research focus on social studies, but that their “natural” inclination could be ascertained by comparing the reading of the first book to the reading of the second and third texts.

### **Research Procedures**

My dissertation committee approved my proposal for this research on March 6, 2012. The University’s Institutional Review Board deemed that this study was Research Exempt from IRB Committee Review (Category 1: Investigational Strategies in Educational Setting) on April 11, 2012, and amended April 24, 2012, to reflect that

participants would be recruited from various settings, not the one school district described in the original IRB documents.

### **Recruitment**

Upon IRB approval, I began to recruit participants by contacting key informants, including principals, curriculum directors, and teachers I knew through my contacts with the local schools, to ask for referrals to teachers who might be willing to participate, using letters, emails, and phone calls (see introductory letter, Appendix F). I started recruiting teachers, mainly through emails to teachers in schools in the area where I work (see sample correspondence, Appendix G). Flyers advertising the study and offering incentives for participation (a new book for their classroom library and a \$20 gift card) were sent out to recruit teachers named by these key informants. The only criteria were that the teachers were currently teaching in grades K, one, or two. Teacher recruitment continued until nine teachers per grade level were recruited; in all, more than 200 teachers were contacted. I only knew two of the participants prior to this study; both were cooperating teachers who mentored my practicum students. These teachers and others recruited friends to participate. Even with some cancellations, I was able to interview the 27 teachers within a five-week time frame.

Geographically, I initially began by contacting teachers from schools near my place of employment; eventually, I expanded my recruiting efforts to schools near my home, approximately 75 miles from the college where I work. Thus, the participants came from a wide geographic area across two states.

Each participant was contacted via email to set up a convenient date and time for an in-person interview. They were also sent the questionnaire to complete and return online (Appendix D) and a consent form (Appendix H) to preview before they received a paper copy during the interview.

Although I had not initially planned to interview participants from multiple school districts, I believe that this yielded the most information about the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2002). This snowball sampling process created an interesting mix of participants from a variety of communities who followed different curriculum guidelines; had the study been limited to one school district, discussions about curriculum may have been more limited. For example, one participant used two of the three books in her second-grade classroom, and her familiarity with these texts appeared to limit her responses about them. This only happened with one participant but if more of the participants had come from her school, their familiarity with the texts might have shaped their responses as well and skewed results.

### **Interview Process**

All interviews were scheduled at the teachers' convenience. Interviews were most often conducted in the teachers' classrooms, with the exception of three teachers who opted to meet at a local coffee shop. Before the interviews began, the consent form (Appendix H) was explained, and each participant signed it to provide their consent to participate. I described the two-part interview process (the think-aloud and the follow-up questions) to each interviewee. I explained that I would digitally record the think-aloud process and the interview, and that I would take abbreviated notes on photocopies of the

books so I would know which page they were referring to as they made comments. This was to free participants from describing each page if they felt it was necessary for the transcription. I explained the transcription process and that they would be sent the transcription for further comment (Note: No substantive comments were received after these were sent so no changes were needed to the transcripts).

Participants were not told in advance that the focus of the study was on using literature to teach social studies; to do so could have confounded the process. For the first book, participants were asked to read the book and talk about how they might use the text in their curriculum. This was to avoid prompting for either literacy or for social studies emphasis and provided a “natural” reading of the text. For the second and third book, each teacher was asked to read the texts and to think aloud about how they would use the book particularly to teach social studies (see Interview Protocol, Appendix E).

### **Data Analysis**

The data collection yielded a large amount of data as the study progressed; after each interview, memos were written to capture impressions and the interviews were transcribed. Because the data included my notes made on copies of the books, it was more straightforward for me to transcribe the interviews myself, rather than have someone else do this. In addition, doing my own transcription helped me to become familiar with the data and to begin encoding with each interview. The formal process of data analysis began by reading and rereading the transcribed interviews. The first three transcribed interviews were segmented and coded by hand to work out the coding

scheme. After developing this initial coding scheme, I used QSR International NVivo 10 software to code all of the interviews with initial coding developing into multiple nodes.

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that a “provisional ‘start list’ of codes prior to fieldwork” (p. 58) is their preferred method of coding. The initial category codes in the present study came from the research questions, the conceptual framework, the literature review, and the pilot study. However, additional substantive categories to describe the participants’ concepts and perspectives were also inductively developed through more open coding of the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In this respect, the collected data were reviewed and additional sub-categories generated, within the context of the major categories. For example, a statement about the open-air market portrayed in *Daisy Comes Home* (Brett, 2002) would have first been classified in the main category of *social studies* and then into the sub-categories of *economics-markets*. Sub-categories were continually added as data were reviewed.

Various strategies were used to address validity threats, including triangulating the data (through questionnaires, think-alouds, and interviews), searching for discrepant data, and comparing multiple sites and cases. I tried to be mindful of my own values, expectations, and possible biases as well as the participants’ reactivity.

The questionnaires were analyzed to create coded profile data on each of the participants (see Appendix C). These profiles were compared against the frequency charts of each category, to see if there were any variables that would account for similarities or differences among the participants. This facilitated the cross-case analysis.

The coding process fragmented the think-aloud data and interviews into separate categories; synthesis involved pulling these fragments together to reconstruct a holistic explanation. I looked for patterns or themes that emerged from the data within and across categories. The findings were compared and contrasted with prior research and the broader literature. From this analysis and synthesis, conclusions and research-related recommendations were formulated.

### **Verbal Analysis**

Protocol analysis has often been used with think-aloud protocols but Chi (1997) promotes verbal analysis as an alternative methodology “for quantifying the subjective or qualitative coding of the contents of verbal utterances” (p. 272). Theoretically, verbal analysis focuses on learning, while protocol analysis focuses on problem solving. In addition, verbal analysis seeks to find the model and knowledge a participant has while the goal of protocol analysis seeks to test a model of how best to do a task.

Chi (1997) recommends that “qualitative data is examined for impressions and trends, methods of coding are developed to capture those impressions, and the codings can then be analyzed quantitatively” (p. 277). This qualitative approach allows for coding the subjective verbal responses and then comparing the frequencies of the codes quantitatively. Chi outlines the eight steps of coding and analyzing verbal data (p. 278); each step is detailed below as operationalized in this study.

**Reducing the protocols** (Chi, 1997, p. 278). I chose to analyze all verbal responses made by participants, excluding small talk, interruptions, and comments unrelated to the study. The data were further reduced by dividing responses into two

activities—think-aloud responses about the three books and comments about the curriculum (both during and after the think-aloud task).

**Segmenting the protocols** (Chi, 1997, pp. 279-282). Segmentation is needed to determine the unit of analysis, and the size of the coding is referred to as “grain size.” The segments or units of analysis were limited to one idea but not one type of structure. Segmentation could be a sentence, a phrase, a paragraph, or a discussion if related to one idea. To code only at the sentence level would artificially limit the idea to a sentence when more than one sentence may be used to convey an idea. Some talkative respondents also said the same thing several times as they were making a point so each was not individually counted. Using NVivo 10 software, the various segments were selected, highlighted, and coded, allowing for a range of grain sizes. Some segments were encoded in multiple categories.

**Developing a coding scheme** (Chi, 1997, pp. 282-283). Codes were developed with details about what evidence is needed for a specific code. The initial coding scheme of the think aloud protocols was based on the research questions, the pilot study, and the study’s conceptual framework (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The coding scheme was further defined by the coding of the first three transcribed interviews to include the main categories of literacy skills, reader response/literary appreciation, social studies, descriptive, other curriculum, and curriculum discussion.

Using the NVivo 10 data analysis program, the transcripts were encoded into a variety of sub-categories. The coding of sub-categories remained flexible throughout the encoding of all the interviews. Subsequent encoding led to over 120 substantive

categories, which were primarily a way for me to sort and label my thinking about each segment. The main categories, however, were the basis of frequency charts that were created to compare the data.

**Operationalizing evidence for coding** (Chi, 1997, p. 283-287). Using NVivo 10 software allowed me to create a framework to sort the data in various ways. I could decide that a comment was evidence of social studies understanding (e.g., “she looks sad, like her feelings are hurt” as an example of discussing feelings) or merely a descriptive comment (e.g., “there is a girl”). As I reviewed the verbal data, I made decisions about what the evidentiary basis for placing a comment in one category and not another; this process allowed me to create descriptions for the categories in the coding scheme below:

Table 3.3

*Coding Scheme: Main Categories in Think-Aloud Task*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>LS</b>	Literacy Skills	Statements related to literacy skill development such as comprehension strategies, plot, setting, characters, academic vocabulary, sentence structure, and text features
<b>RR</b>	Reader Response/ Literary Appreciation	Comments related to evaluation of literary merits of texts, reader response, text-to-self and intertextual connections
<b>SS</b>	Social Studies	Statements related to social studies understanding including content vocabulary, themes, prior content knowledge
<b>DE</b>	Description	Descriptive statements regarding text or images but with no stated purpose or evaluation
<b>OC</b>	Other Curriculum	References to using book with other subject areas
<b>CD</b>	Curriculum Discussion (during book reading)	Discussion of curriculum or teaching during the think aloud that were not related directly to book

This framework allowed me to make decisions on the thousands of comments as they were read, interpreted, and sorted, often into multiple categories. The NVivo 10 software uses highlighting stripes on the side that can be hidden. Multiple readings can be done as if the transcript was fresh; the different passes through the data helped me to identify nuanced meaning in many instances. The software enabled differentiated coding with overlapping segmentation. The context or the lines of data before or after a segment could also be easily accessed so smaller segments could be selected without losing the context. For example, when Kindergarten teacher Katy thought aloud as she read *Grandpa's Corner Store* (DiSalvo-Ryan, 2000), she said the following:

Just by looking at the [inside front] cover, I see the map. Umm, discussing locations, umm vocabulary words like *near* or *far away*, or um *in front*, *on*, *behind*, *next to*. Uhh, locating streets by names, symbols.

The parts of this passage were coded in several ways: as references to social studies (mapping, directions, and places), literacy (prereading front cover, content vocabulary), and planning processes (discussion points).

**Depicting the mapped formalism** (Chi, 1997, p. 287). Coded data were tabulated using NVivo 10 and Excel spreadsheets to develop counts and frequencies. The coding scheme allowed comparison of the frequencies of tabulated coded responses. The counts were also transformed into percentages so participant responses could be compared relative to content instead of the number of words used. Frequency tables and percentage charts are presented in the findings chapters and appendices.

**Seeking patterns in the depicted data** (Chi, 1997, p. 287-290). Graphical depiction of the data provided a means of finding patterns in the data. Some patterns,

such as the differences in the main categories, were easy to see when depicted in the percentage charts. Using NVivo 10, the linkages between the sub-categories were also analyzed to look for patterns in the types of responses per participant, across different groups (such as the different grade levels of the teachers), and across the different books read. Chi (1997) refers to this as “quantifying a perceived pattern” (p. 289); her examples included graphical depictions of representations of children’s knowledge of science-related topics. In this study, the conceptual framework described in Chapter 2 (Figure 2.1) was transformed into a graphical depiction of the findings and conclusions described in Chapter 8 (Figure 8.1).

**Interpreting the pattern** (Chi, 1997, pp. 290-291). Interpretation of the patterns in the data depends on the research questions and the theoretical orientation of the research (Chi, 1997). The think-aloud data were interpreted based on the types of content focus that that teachers verbalized (research question 1), an indication of the understandings of each participant, and on the processes that they utilized to preview each book (research question 2), which may be linked to the training and background of teachers and their perceptions of curriculum demands (research question 3).

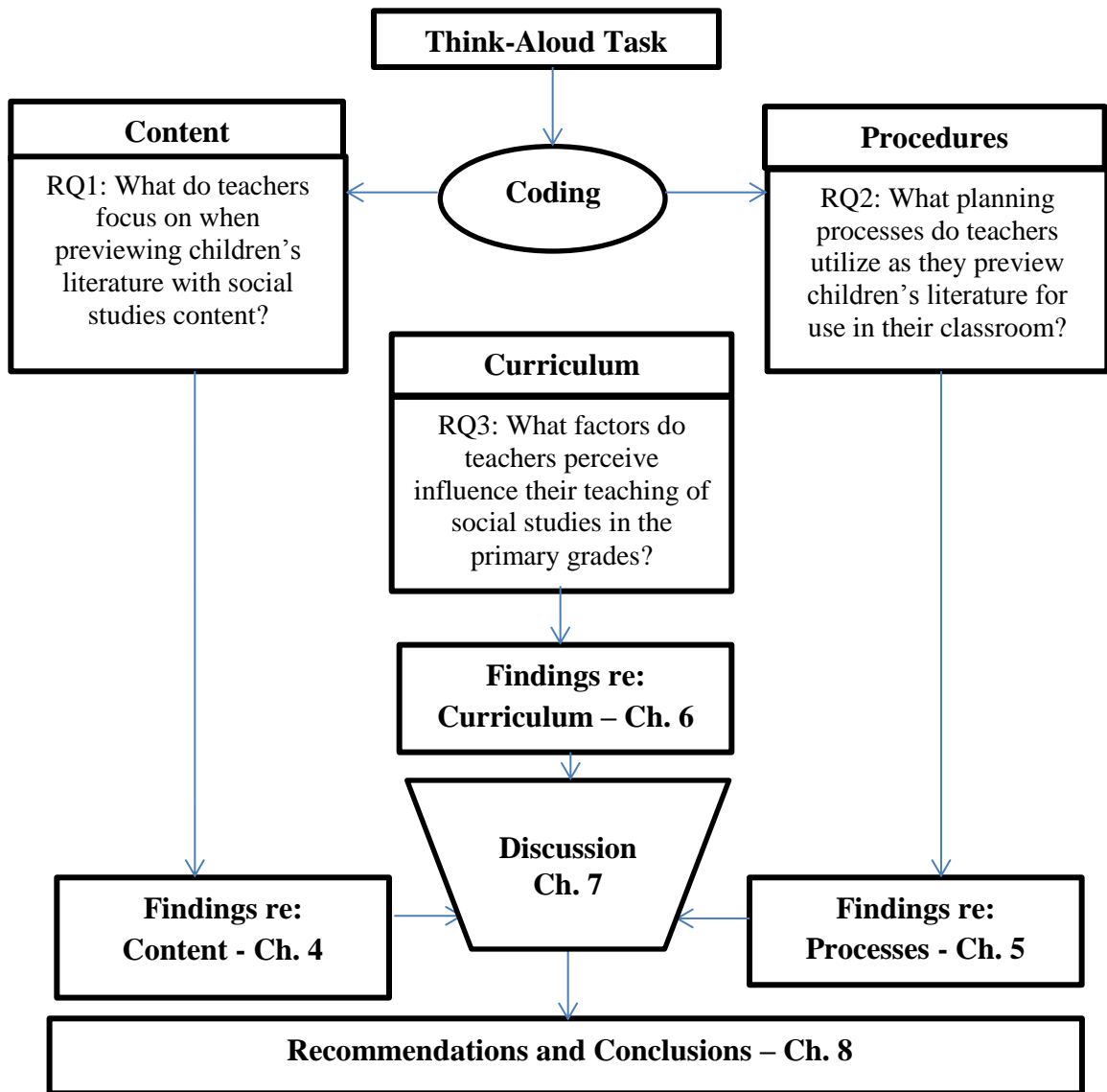
**Repeating the process** (Chi, 1997, pp. 291-292). The interpretation may be validated by coding the data twice. The initial coding of the think-aloud protocols explored what the teachers focused on as they verbalized their thoughts about each book. The second pass through the data looked at the procedures that the teachers used to approach the planning process. This led to the Planning Process Coding Scheme discussed in Chapter 5 (see Appendix N), representing a tabulation of the approaches of

the participants. The two codings were examined for patterns relating them to each other. Some of the patterns of interest included the procedures of teachers who had a high amount of social studies content comments with those who had a low amount, the procedures of those with a high amount of literacy or literary emphasis compared to those who had lower, and the procedures and content of those who ranked social studies or language arts as favorite subjects to teach.

The curriculum discussions were coded separately. Some of these comments were offered as the think-aloud task was completed and were coded in the first pass through that data. Most of the comments came from the discussion around questions asked during the semi-structured interview protocol. These data were coded under the main category “curriculum discussion” and included a variety of topics such as schedules, teaching, and district mandates. The verbal analysis of the curriculum discussion as relating to the third research question was done separately from the first two codings. The findings of the two think-aloud task codings are outlined as follows: findings related to content (research question 1) are in Chapter 4; those related to process (research question 2) are detailed in Chapter 5; and those related to curriculum (research question 3) are found in Chapter 6. Discussion of the findings appears in Chapter 7, and conclusions and recommendations are found in Chapter 8. Figure 3.1 outlines the process:

Figure 3.1

*Verbal Analysis of Think-Aloud Task*



## Issues of Trustworthiness

### Validity

Validity (or credibility) can be thought of as a “commonsense way to refer to the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, [or] interpretation” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 106). Validity concerns in qualitative data come from the richness and scope of the data, the participants included, the extent of triangulation, and the objectivity of the researcher (Maxwell, 2005). The sampling strategy was a chain sampling to find participants who would fit into the stratified purposeful sample of teachers in grades K-2 (Patton, 1990). Teachers with an affinity for teaching social studies were not intentionally sought out, but neither would they have been turned away. The sample was sufficiently large, with 27 participants to support the study’s purpose of examining the approaches of a variety of teachers across the three grade levels.

Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002) contend that public disclosure of methods, decisions, and research processes, including triangulation, is essential in addressing validity concerns in qualitative research. They advocate the use of tables to detail how research questions determine the data sources, how categories developed from the data, and how findings relate to the research questions and data sources. For the current study, I created tables and charts to represent the methods, the findings, and the interpretations. There are examples of such throughout the chapters and in appendices. Making graphic representations enables ideas and relationships to be explicit in an efficient and straightforward manner.

**Triangulation.** Triangulation is achieved by making use of two or more methods of data collection, in this case, the questionnaire, the think-aloud tasks, and the interview. The more the interviews correspond to the think-alouds and the questionnaires, the more confidence there will be in the findings. The table detailing how the sources align to the research questions provides evidence of such correspondence (see Table 3.1).

**Other Considerations.** It is important to consider validity threats, ways that interpretations of findings might be incorrect. I have made attempts to control for extraneous variables, such as the homogeneity of the community in type, size of school, and the students' socioeconomic status; I have also selected the same number of teachers from each grade level. This selection strategy is intended to address alternative explanations. For example, if there were large differences in the socioeconomic status of the schools' families (as indicated by the F/RL percentage), this could suggest an alternative explanation; schools with a high percentage of low-income students tend to have greater emphasis on reading and math to the exclusion of social studies (von Zastrow & Janc, 2004). Data about the teachers' background and teaching experiences are described in detail in the narrative and in tabular form (see Appendices C, O, and P) to allow the reader to determine applicability to other situations. Using evidence collected during the study, alternative explanations are considered and addressed as appropriate.

### **Dependability**

Qualitative research is more concerned with dependability or whether the findings are consistent with the data than with reliability, which is concerned with the extent that a study can be replicated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Documentation of procedures and

coding schemes through keeping an audit trail and establishing inter-rater agreement are important demonstrations of consistent use.

**Audit trail.** An audit trail documented the process and rationale for the choices I made throughout the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An electronic journal of memos and detailed accounts of how the data are analyzed and interpreted helped me to remember details and to note ongoing reflection. Keeping a journal of decisions as well as email documents, notes from interviews, interview recordings, copies of completed questionnaires, and both raw and coded transcripts, served as a means of documenting how the findings were derived from the data. This aids in confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) that the findings were the result of the research; researcher bias and subjectivity are acknowledged, but the data drive the findings and discussion.

**Inter-rater agreement.** Inter-rater agreement (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was established by comparing coding done by a critical colleague to the coding I had done on two think-aloud protocols and interviews. This cross-checking sought to establish whether another researcher would code segments with the same or similar codes. This colleague is a social studies educator, experienced teaching at the middle school level and who has taught elementary social studies methods; she was not familiar with qualitative coding. Detailed directions and a sample of coded data helped the colleague understand the task; the inter-rater agreement directions and segments of coded interviews are available in Appendices I and J. The transcripts were segmented for the colleague because I was concerned that the varied lengths of the segments (phrases, sentences, paragraphs) would cause confusion. I compared my colleague's coding to what I had

previously coded. Differences in ratings were examined and reconciled with the data as needed, with the scoring process noted in Appendix J. The inter-rater agreement was 89% with the sub-categories and 94% with the main category coding. Agreement of at least 80% is considered acceptable consistency (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### **Transferability**

Transferability refers to the extent that the particular phenomenon studied in a particular context could be transferred to another context (Patton, 1990). In qualitative studies, this is more appropriate than generalizability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thick description of participants and context provides a means for the reader to compare to other settings. The number of participants ( $N = 27$ ) and the use of 14 sites should help to address questions about transferability: this is not just a case study about one exemplary teacher or about teachers in one school. Using 14 schools from different types of communities (e.g., large suburb, town fringe, rural fringe, and town distant) and having the three different grade levels equally represented in the study may help to envision transference of findings to other settings. Teacher selection was based on their willingness to participate, not because they are exemplary teachers; however, those who did volunteer may share some unexplored characteristic and they may indeed be exemplary. With the description of the settings and the participants, together with providing the questionnaire, the think-aloud procedure, the interview protocol, and the text selection process, as well as the research question matrix, I have tried to be as transparent about the process as possible. The inclusion of information on the recruitment process and the settings may also help to present transferable findings; the teachers may

or may not be representative of typical teachers but this judgment will be left to the reader.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Protection of participants is of utmost concern in any research study. As the researcher, I am responsible for informing and protecting the voluntary participants. In this study, there was no risk to the participants but informing them before the first think-aloud task that the research sought to look at how teachers read children's literature to teach social studies could have undermined the study. In consulting with committee members, I determined that the purpose could legitimately be phrased more vaguely to inform the participants that the study sought to explore how primary grade teachers use picture books in the primary curriculum. This would make it a more neutral – although still accurate – statement that did not lead the teacher to focus on either literacy or social studies until after the first book was read.

A central ethical issue is to protect the participants in the way the information is treated. Although no serious ethical threats were anticipated, I employed various safeguards to ensure the protection and rights of the participants. First, informed consent was a priority throughout the study. Voluntary participation was confirmed by written consent. Second, the participants' names and identifying data are stored in an area separate from any reports and dissemination of data. Storage of research-related data and records are secured so that no one other than me and my committee have access to the material. Third, participants were informed that this study would not be used in any way to evaluate them and that there was no right or wrong way to respond to the task or

interview questions. Teachers were assured that they were not being evaluated on what they said but the research interest was on the themes found across the different responses. This was another reason for using verbal analysis (Chi, 1997); such an analysis does not evaluate performance to some exemplary model as is often used in think-aloud protocol analysis (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995; van Someren et al. 1994).

### **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations of this study include those common to qualitative research methodology and those specific to this study. Qualitative research depends on the researcher's choices, understanding, and subjectivity. Researcher bias is an acknowledged component of the qualitative process, and it acts to frame the assumptions, questions, focus, perceptions, and findings of the study. My experiences as a primary-grade teacher and a social studies teacher educator introduced potential bias. Acknowledging the research agenda and stating assumptions up front was an effort to confront my biases. Having a colleague review the coding schemes and interview data was an effort to reduce the bias. Keeping a reflexive journal and writing memos throughout the process was an effort to be mindful of the bias that enters the process.

The participants may have had some reactivity (Maxwell, 2005) to a researcher coming in to interview them. Interacting with the participants in their classrooms or settings that they selected should have provided a measure of comfort. I also tried to engender a congenial atmosphere with small talk and by not evaluating their practice.

Limitations of this think-aloud protocol may be the teachers' ability to verbalize their thoughts about the text and the constraints they might have by having their opinions

and ideas recorded. The results were obtained from a relatively small population ( $N = 27$ ) who were geographically limited to suburban or rural communities in one metro area. These factors significantly limit the generalizability of the study. A further limitation is the use of only three pre-selected texts, which does not allow for examination of the teachers' own text selection process. Because the texts are primary reading level texts, the teachers did not have trouble reading the text, but the inherent simplicity may have limited the amount of response by some teachers.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter outlined the research methodology of this study. Qualitative research is most appropriate because I sought to describe and explain a phenomenon. The think-aloud tasks and verbal analysis provided a means of understanding what teachers focus on as they read children's literature with social studies content. Together with the answers to the questionnaire and interview, the think-aloud responses provide a means of creating a rich description of the considerations and influences on primary-grade teachers' thinking and planning processes with regard to using children's literature to teach social studies. The verbal analysis process study design provides a means for examining the responses of a number of individuals who have experience with the phenomenon in question and describing patterns found within the group. This design allowed for a systematic procedure to explore multiple cases without focusing on one specific individual or comparing responses to a model (Chi, 1997).

The participants in the study included 27 purposefully selected teachers in grades K-2. Data collection methods included a demographic/interest questionnaire, think-aloud

tasks, and semi-structured individual interviews. The data were reviewed against literature as well as emergent themes. Validity and dependability were addressed through various strategies: triangulating of data and sources, keeping an audit trail, and establishing inter-rater agreement. The three research questions led to three analytical categories: content, processes, and curriculum. The findings related to each are considered, in turn, in the next three chapters. Discussion and conclusions follow in the final two chapters.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Focusing on Social Studies – Findings Related to Content**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore primary-grade teachers' perceptions of teaching social studies with children's literature. A better understanding of this phenomenon may allow educators and curriculum developers to proceed from a more informed perspective of the challenges of teaching elementary social studies. The key content-related finding from this study was that these primary-grade teachers were focused on social studies ideas more than literacy development, even before they were prompted to focus on social studies. This is in contrast to previous research, which found that teachers focused more on literacy development even when they said they were teaching social studies (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008; Sunal & Sunal, 2007-8)

Twenty-seven interviews were conducted during May and June 2012. Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed, and the comments were segmented and encoded to explore themes and relationships. Each interview consisted of (1) a think-aloud task with three texts to find out what participants think about as they read a picture book for use in their classroom and (2) a discussion with participants about their social studies curriculum. Findings from the think-aloud task address the first two research questions and are examined in this chapter and the next. The first research question examines the content focus of the teachers as they read the three books is explored in this chapter; the second research question explores the processes the teachers used as they read the books and is examined in Chapter 5. Findings from the curriculum discussion

address the third research question and are addressed in Chapter 6. Discussion follows in Chapter 7 with Conclusions and Recommendations discussed in Chapter 8.

### **Keying in on Social Studies**

The first research question is: What do teachers in the primary grades focus on when previewing children's literature with social studies content? The main finding that emerged from the verbal analysis of the think-aloud protocol data was that teachers did focus a significant amount of their attention to social studies content. Evidence to support this statement includes the following:

1. When reading the first book, before social studies was cued, 39% of participants' comments related to social studies, 32% related to literacy skills, and 16% related to reader response.
2. When reading the second and third books, after social studies was cued, comments related to social studies constituted 60% for the total number of comments for Book 2 (495 of 822 comments) and 53% (466 of 878 comments) for Book 3.
3. Overall, participants made more social studies comments (1,217 of 2,436 [50%]) than language-related comments (1,004 of 2,436 [41%]).
4. Participants noted social studies content in each of the books read (Book A = 42%, Book B = 61%, Book C = 53%).
5. Across grade levels, the percentage of comments related to social studies was 46% for Kindergarten teachers, 60% for first-grade teachers, and 50% for second-grade teachers.

6. The percentage of comments related to social studies in the first book (before social studies was cued) differed by which book was read first: Book A, 20%; Book B, 53%; and Book C, 48%; that is, for example, when Book A was read first, 20% of the comments were related to social studies.

### **Procedure and Coding Scheme of Content Comments**

Three books were presented to the 27 participants to read and comment on. The order of the three books was alternated across the three grade levels of teachers represented, using the counterbalanced design (Krathwohl, 1993) described earlier. Each book was presented as the first book nine times to help control for the type, content, and quality of the book. The counterbalanced design allows for a means of tabulating, counting, and drawing relationships between the comments made by the participants in order to reduce the subjectivity of qualitative coding. Using Chi's (1997) verbal analysis method, the qualitative data were examined for impressions or themes, and codings were developed to be examined quantitatively.

The topics for the comments were coded into six main categories: (1) literacy skills, (2) reader response, (3) social studies, (4) descriptive responses, (5) other responses, and (6) curriculum comments made during book reading. Many of the subcategories in the literacy skills, reader response, and descriptive response categories were derived from the verbal protocol reports detailed by Pressley and Afflerbach (1995), which provide a means of detailing how readers process text. Dividing the language arts focus into (1) literacy skills and (2) literary appreciation or reader response was a means of making the subcategories more manageable; there is arguably some overlap in these

subcategories (for example, making text-to-self connections – a reader response subcategory – fosters comprehension, which is a literacy aim). The purpose of the study is focused on the broader categories of the language arts and social studies, but the variety of subcategories identified provides substantive evidence of the participants' understanding of content and practice.

**Factor 4.1. When reading the first book, before social studies was cued, 39% of participants' comments related to social studies, 32% related to literacy skills, and 16% related to reader response.**

For the first book presented to the teachers, they were tasked to think aloud about how they might use the book in their classroom, including what things they would focus on, the comments they would make, things they might need to explain, and the questions they might ask. The participants were not given any cues to think about social studies for this first book. Table 4.1 represents the percentage of topical responses for each participant, listed alphabetically. The responses are tabulated for each book and the book highlighted was the first book read.

Table 4.1

*Percentage of Participants' Responses Regarding Language Arts and Social Studies*

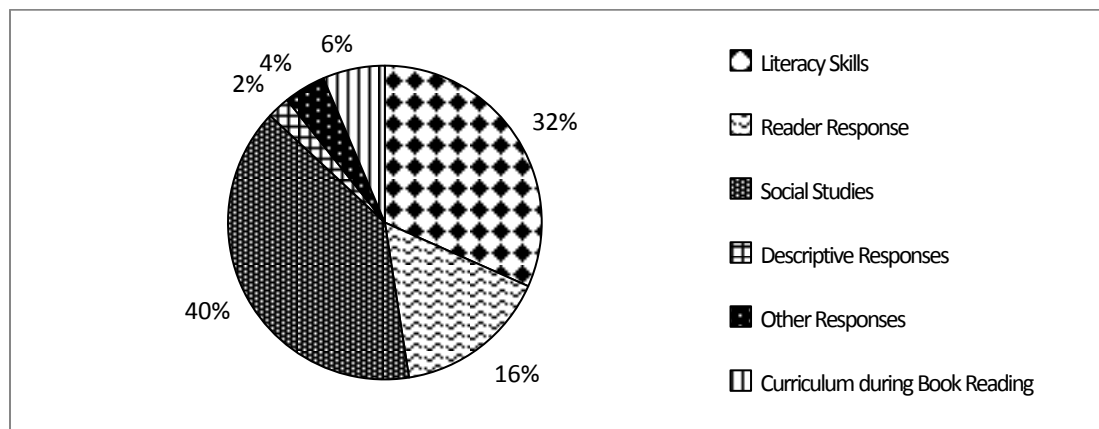
<b>Interview Number</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Bk A - LA</b>	<b>Bk A - SSt</b>	<b>Bk B - LA</b>	<b>Bk B - SSt</b>	<b>Bk C - LA</b>	<b>Bk C - SSt</b>	<b>LA Ave</b>	<b>SSt Ave</b>
24	Allison	2.8.2	50%	50%	62%	35%	19%	71%	44%	52%
11	Anna	2.1.3	53%	43%	54%	45%	52%	29%	53%	39%
15	April	K.2.3	53%	39%	54%	46%	34%	47%	47%	44%
1	Beth	1.1.2	31%	57%	39%	31%	14%	77%	28%	55%
14	Cheryl	K.6.2	46%	34%	51%	43%	25%	54%	41%	44%
16	Dan	K.8.3	14%	69%	0%	71%	28%	43%	14%	61%
18	Debbie	2.3.1	69%	21%	11%	89%	78%	22%	53%	44%
12	Denise	1.5.1	61%	22%	15%	69%	36%	57%	37%	49%
22	Gina	K.9.2	67%	33%	44%	41%	24%	67%	45%	47%
21	Grammy	2.6.1	64%	7%	0%	100%	50%	22%	38%	43%
9	Jessie	1.7.2	13%	86%	5%	89%	3%	92%	7%	89%
27	Jodi	2.9.1	70%	30%	30%	70%	29%	61%	43%	54%
2	Katy	K.1.1	61%	14%	21%	79%	37%	36%	40%	43%
8	Kelly	1.3.3	30%	70%	12%	89%	38%	51%	27%	70%
5	Laura	2.2.2	23%	77%	25%	67%	8%	83%	19%	76%
10	Linda	K.5.3	69%	31%	40%	49%	39%	39%	49%	40%
7	Melody	1.9.3	31%	62%	13%	87%	40%	50%	28%	66%
13	Michelle	2.4.3	62%	38%	50%	50%	60%	39%	57%	42%
26	Monitess	2.7.3	45%	41%	38%	62%	37%	49%	40%	51%
23	Ms. B	1.8.1	35%	11%	50%	50%	34%	56%	40%	39%
19	Nancy	2.5.2	72%	28%	59%	41%	17%	70%	49%	46%
3	Paige	1.2.1	71%	13%	14%	77%	40%	41%	42%	44%
6	Sandy	1.6.3	67%	30%	25%	75%	30%	48%	41%	51%
25	Sharon	K.4.1	64%	18%	46%	41%	37%	59%	49%	39%
17	Tracy	K.7.1	74%	17%	39%	62%	36%	35%	50%	38%
4	Tulip	1.4.2	37%	63%	5%	95%	29%	55%	24%	71%
20	Vivian	K.3.2	70%	30%	40%	60%	12%	71%	41%	54%

There were 812 comments for the first book, 32% (257) of which focused on building literacy skills and 16% (129) reflected reader response ideas. This amounted to 48% for language arts emphasis. Social studies concepts were commented on 320 times

(39%). Descriptive responses include statements of what is happening in the book, details, and description of pictures; there were 19 such comments in the first book, representing 2% of the total. Other responses relating to content area connections such as comments related to math, science, and health represented 35 responses and 4% of the total comments on the first book. The percentages for the main categories found on the first book read are graphically depicted in Figure 4.1 (below) with the exact frequency counts and percentages found in Table 4.2, Appendix K.

Figure 4.1

*Content Comments on First Book Read (Not Cued for Social Studies) – Percentage of Main Categories*



The sixth category was “discussion of the curriculum during book reading,” wherein teachers made comments about their curriculum during the think-aloud task about the books, as opposed to discussion after the books were read. The 52 comments (6%) are represented in the charts reflecting the comments offered during the think aloud, but are considered more fully in the discussion of the curriculum outlined in the next chapter.

**Factor 4.2. When reading the second and third books, after social studies was cued, the participants’ comments related to social studies constituted 60% of the total number of comments for Book 2 (495 of 822 comments) and 53% (466 of 878 comments) for Book 3.**

After reading the first book, teachers were asked to further reflect on social studies ideas, so the teachers had this additional task while reading the second and third books. For the second book read, there were 822 total comments with 167 related to literacy skills (20%) and 102 related to reader response (12%), for a total of 32% related to language arts. There were 495 comments related to social studies (60% of the total comments). The chart in Figure 4.2 (above) represents these findings and Table 4.3 (found in Appendix K) provides details on the frequency and percentage of the main categories found in the second book read.

Figure 4.2

*Content Comments on Second Book Read – Percentage of Main Categories*

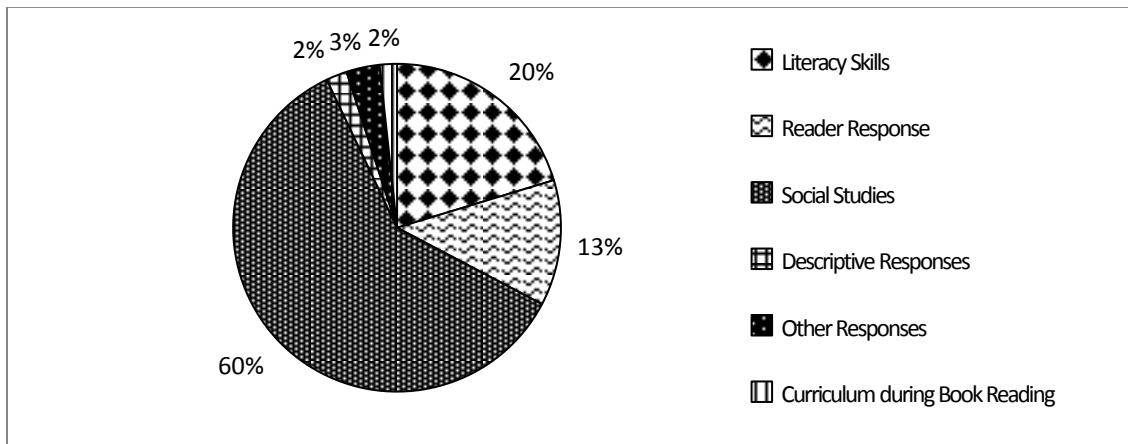
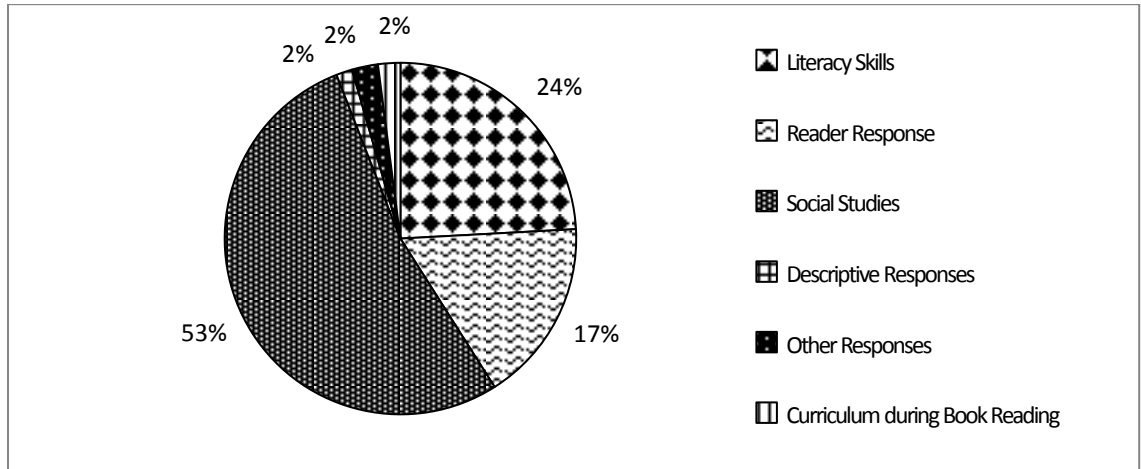


Figure 4.3

*Content Comments on Third Book Read – Percentage of Main Categories*



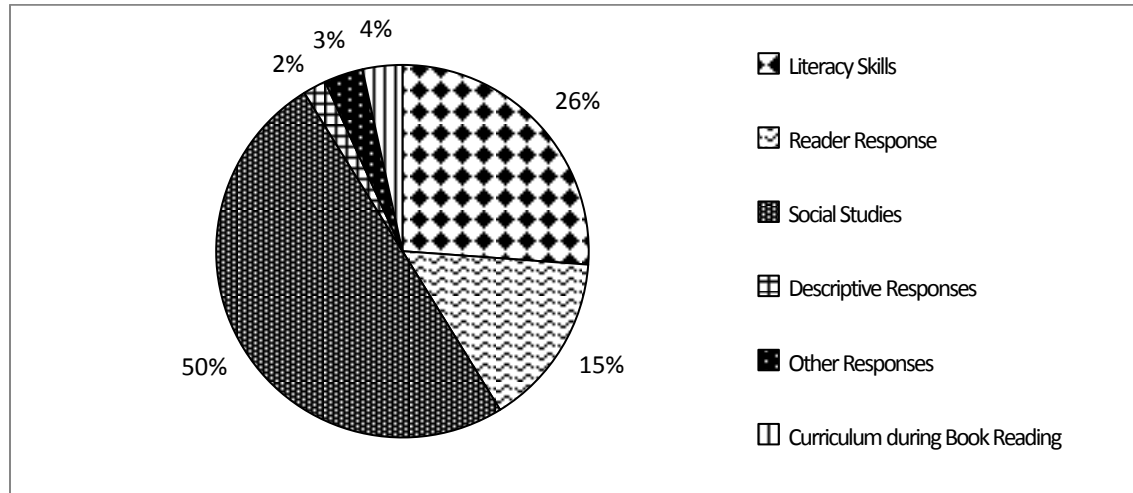
Reading the third book led to 878 comments overall with 212 related to literacy skills (24%) and 148 related to reader response (17%); the focus on language arts accounted for 41% of the total. Social studies comments were 53% of the total (466). The percentages are depicted in Figure 4.3 (above) and Table 4.4 (found in Appendix K), and represent the proportion of main category comments found in the third book read.

**Factor 4.3. Overall, participants made more social studies comments (1,217 of 2,436 [50%]) than language-related comments (1,044 of 2,436 [41%]).**

There were 2,436 comments across all three books. There were 1,217 responses in the social studies category, coded into civics, cultural universals, cultures, economics, geography, history, and personal development, as well as many other sub-categories (see list of categories, sub-categories and references in Appendix L). This was the dominant category, with 50% of comments coded as related to social studies.

Figure 4.4

*Overall Content Comments on the Three Books – Percentage of Main Categories*



Responses related to language arts were divided into literacy skills (focusing on comprehension, vocabulary, and reading skill development) and reader response (focusing on literary appreciation). Literacy skills had an overall response of 637 comments (26%), and there were 367 reader response comments (Sub-categories and topics are listed in Appendix K). Taken as a whole, there were 1,004 responses related to language arts, or 41% of the overall comments. Figure 4.4 (below) displays the percentage of responses overall in each main category and Table 4.5 (found in Appendix K) tabulates the frequency and percentage of each main category of response.

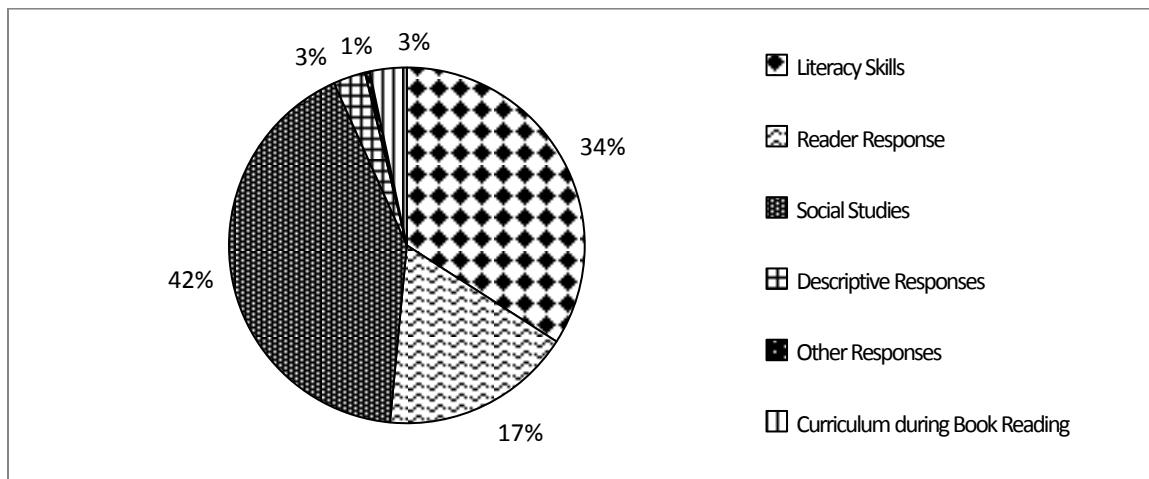
**Factor 4.4. Participants noted social studies content in each of the books read (Book A = 42%, Book B = 61%, and Book C = 53%).**

The responses were sorted for each book to see the main category content comment totals per text. Book A, Brett's *Daisy Comes Home* (2002) had 924 coded

comments. This book had the least number of social studies comments at 42%. The following chart in Figure 4.5 represents the percentages of the main categories mentioned with frequencies and percentages tabulated in Table 4.6 (found in Appendix K).

Figure 4.5

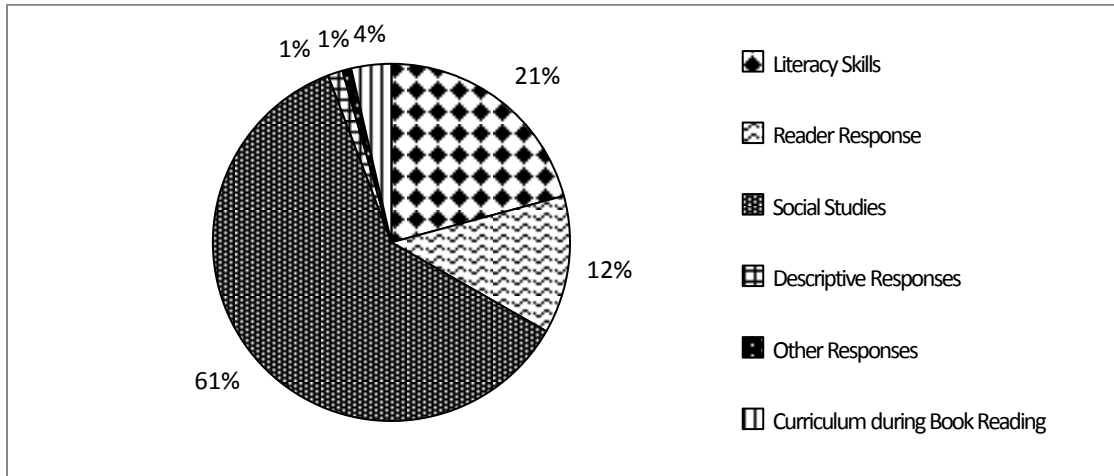
*Content Comments on Book A, Daisy Comes Home, Percentage of Main Categories*



The responses for Book B, DiSalvo-Ryan’s *Grandpa’s Corner Store* (2000), had 745 coded comments. Social studies comments represented 61% of all the comments made by participants as they read this book. Literacy comments, included literacy skills and reader response, amounted to 33% of the total number of comments. Figure 4.6 below shows the percentages of each main category; the specific frequencies and percentages of the main category responses to Book B are outlined in Table 4.7 (found in Appendix K).

Figure 4.6

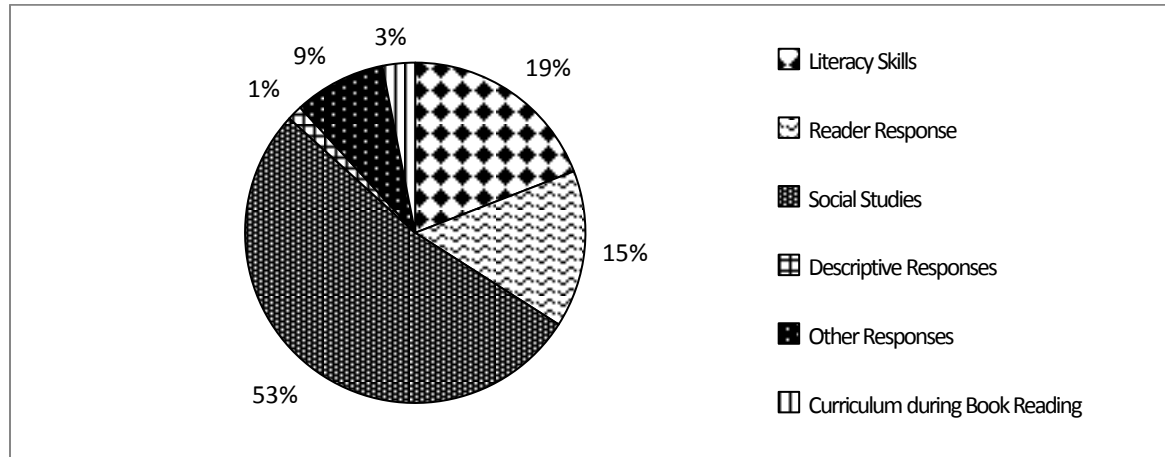
*Content Comments on Book B, Grandpa's Corner Store – Percentage of Main Categories*



There were 837 comments on the third book, Krull's *Supermarket* (2001). Social studies comments amounted to 53% of the total number of comments with the combination of literacy skills and reader response were 34% of the total. Figure 4.7 (below) outlines the percentages of main categories found when Book C was read and Table 4.8 (found in Appendix K) details the frequencies and percentages of the main categories found.

Figure 4.7

*Content Comments on Book C, Supermarket – Percentages of Main Categories*



**Factor 4.5. Across grade levels, the percentage of comments related to social studies was 46% for Kindergarten teachers, 60% for first grade teachers, and 50% for second grade teachers.**

Table 4.9

*Percentage of Responses Per Teachers' Grade Level and Book for Language Arts and Social Studies*

	<b>Kindergarten</b>	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
Book A – Language Arts	58%	42%	57%
Book A – Social Studies	32%	46%	37%
Book B – Language Arts	37%	20%	37%
Book B – Social Studies	55%	74%	62%
Book C – Language Arts	30%	29%	39%
Book C – Social Studies	50%	59%	50%
<b>Average Language Arts</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>Average Social Studies</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>50%</b>

There were nine participants for each grade level in this study. The nine Kindergarten teachers made 42% of responses related to language arts (combined literacy and literary focus) and 46% related to social studies. The nine first-grade teachers had 30% of responses related to language arts and 60% about social studies topics. Second grade teachers had 44% related to language arts and 50% related to social studies. A list of the percentage of responses regarding language arts and social studies is tabulated in Table 4.1 (above), which lists each teacher, their percentages for each book and their average percentage for language arts and for social studies. A breakdown of the percentages of each teacher per grade level is found in Appendix M. An overview of the percentages for language arts and social studies per grade level and across the three different books is outlined in the following table:

**Factor 4.6. The percentage of comments related to social studies in the first book (before social studies was cued) differed by which book was read first: Book A, 20%; Book B, 53%; and Book C, 48%.**

There was a difference in the number of social studies comments made when reading the first book, depending on which book was read first. Book A, *Daisy Comes Home* (Brett, 2002) had the least number of comments relating to social studies (46 out of 243 total comments [20%]). Book C, the informational text *Supermarket* (Krull, 2001) had 48% of comments relating to social studies (131 of 293) and Book B, *Grandpa's Corner Store* (DiSalvo-Ryan, 2000) had the largest number of comments on social studies ideas at 53% (131 of 293). These comments are tabulated in Table 4.9 located in Appendix K.

## Chapter Summary

The participants' comments as they completed the think-aloud task centered on six main categories of content response: (1) literacy skills, (2) reader response, (3) social studies, (4) descriptive responses, (5) other responses, and (6) curriculum during book reading. This chapter, focusing on "content findings," presented tabulated and charted data according to the order of the book read, the individual book, and across the grade level of the teachers. Overall, teachers made more social studies than language arts comments, a finding that is contrary to prior research (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008). Before prompting for teaching social studies, the participants noted social studies almost as much as literacy or literary ideas; after prompting to focus on social studies, the participants focused the majority of their comments on social studies but also noted literacy and literary aspects of each book read. This finding will be discussed in further in Chapter 7.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Making Connections – Findings Related to Process**

This qualitative study sought to explore perceptions of teaching social studies with children's literature with a sample of teachers in the primary grades. This includes how the teachers would plan to use the text to teach social studies. In this chapter, the approaches the teachers verbalized in the think-aloud task are categorized as processes or procedures used by the teachers. Verbal analysis (Chi, 1997) was again used to look for the processes that teachers focused on as they read the three books to address the second research question: What planning processes do teachers in the primary grades utilize as they preview children's literature for use in teaching social studies? The main finding from the classification of the processes used is that these primary-grade teachers look for ways to use texts for multiple purposes.

#### **Procedure and Coding Scheme of Process Comments**

The think-aloud protocols were encoded a second time with the intent to identify the processes the teachers used to plan how they would utilize the three books. The participants mentioned many reading and thinking strategies they would use with their students to support literacy skill development and content understanding; they also made numerous comments that considered how reader response and literary appreciation would be encouraged while reading these books. The comments were inductively encoded, but my categorizations were informed by the thinking strategies of effective readers as outlined by Daniels and Zemelman (2004), by the instructional implications of transactional theory based on Rosenblatt (1994), and by the social studies integration

suggestions of Brophy and Alleman (2007). I did not seek to evaluate the processes that the teachers used in relation to these theories or models of practice, but my categorization labels were undoubtedly influenced by them. In addition, participants also used terminology directly from literacy instruction practice (e.g., predict, summarize, and infer) and literary appreciation (e.g., making text-to-self connection and anticipating affective responses), so the categories are connected to many standard practices in reading instruction.

Five categories of processes were adapted from the suggestions for evaluating texts to use in teaching social studies, as outlined by Brophy and Alleman (2007); these incorporate ideas of effective reading strategies (Daniels & Zemelman, 2004) and reader response theory (Rosenblatt, 1994). Sub-categories of processes (detailed in Appendix N) were developed from these five main categories:

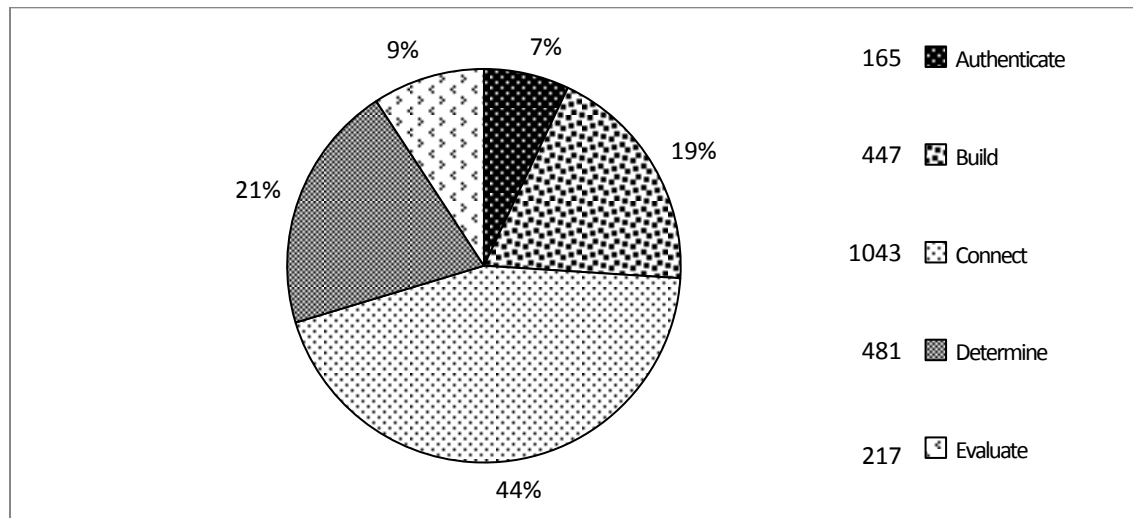
- A. **Authenticate** – The text by checking content and author intent
- B. **Build** – Understanding, background knowledge, comprehension
- C. **Connect** – To something else, to integrate content and reading strategies
- D. **Determine** – Purpose, discussion points, and questions
- E. **Evaluate** – Usefulness for building content understanding and student response

The number of participants listed for each sub-category in Appendix N, indicates those who happened to mention the process as they were reading these particular books; teachers were not asked specifically to consider any of the strategies or processes. These may not represent all that a teacher would do but are the categories of only what was found in these interviews. They should not be taken as an evaluation or a statement of a

lack of competence; there are only so many things to mention or that come to mind within the course of the interview. For example, there were 22 participants who described something I coded as “checking comprehension” but this common practice would probably have been done by all of the participants; it just happened here that five teachers did not mention this process specifically during the interview. As seen in Figure 5.1, almost half of the comments were related to making connections.

Figure 5.1

*Comments Related to Planning Processes*



**Multiple Purposes**

The main finding from this review of the processes is that teachers looked for ways to use texts for multiple purposes. From the five main categories and the sub-categories detailed in Appendix N, eight patterns emerged regarding the planning processes the participants used and these patterns became contributing factors to the key finding:

1. **Literacy Development:** Participants planned to use a variety of processes to build literacy skills through the use of the three books.
2. **Content Connections:** All of the participants made some connections to content areas as they read each book.
3. **Discussions and Questions:** Almost all of the participants (26 of 27 [96%]) determined discussions (263 references) they would have and many (20 of 27 [74%]) specified questions (116 references) that they would ask their students as they read each book.
4. **Literary Connections:** All participants indicated that they would encourage text-to-self connections (176 times) as they were reading the text, some modeling their own connections as examples.
5. **Pictures:** Most participants (20 of 27 [74%]) referred to encouraging students to make meaning from pictures (106 references). Many commented on the quality of the images and noted that this was important to their students' appreciation of the text.
6. **Student Response:** The majority of participants (24 of 27 [89%]) mentioned potential student responses to the text if they would read the books to their class.
7. **Evaluate Text:** All participants considered the genre of each book, and many (13 of 27 [48%]) mentioned looking for informational texts to bring into their curriculum.
8. **Reading Experiences:** Most participants (24 of 27 [89%]) planned to use each of the three books as a read aloud for their class; several mentioned also using the

books in guided reading or in shared reading time because of the layout of the text or the content.

**Factor 5.1 – Literacy Development: Participants planned to use a variety of processes to build literacy skills through the use of the three books.**

Table 5.1

*Participants’ Processes Related to Thinking Strategies of Effective Readers*

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Related Sub-categories Found in Participants’ Comments</b>
Visualize	Picture walk, visualize, set purpose, imagery
Connect	Activate prior knowledge, brainstorming, refer to author, connect to self, connect to other text, connect to activities, refer to content curriculum
Question	Plan questions
Infer	Make inferences, predictions
Evaluate	Evaluate usefulness, authenticity, text content, images
Analyze	Compare and contrast, use pictures for meaning, value judgment
Recall	Refer to content curriculum, plan questions, plan discussions, summarize, take notes
Self-Monitor	Check comprehension, evaluate misconceptions

Participants used many of the processes that reading experts have found are used by skilled readers such as setting a purpose for reading, overviewing a text, relating ideas to their prior knowledge, varying their reading speed, skimming where needed, making predictions and inferences, interpreting, visualizing, asking questions, making connections, and summarizing (Pressley, 2006; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). They planned to encourage many of the thinking strategies of effective readers detailed by Daniels and Zemelman (2004) including efforts to visualize, connect, question, infer, evaluate, analyze, recall, and self-monitor. These strategies were encoded in several

different sub-categories as outlined above in Table 5.1; this does not include all of the processes teachers focused on (see Appendix N).

The participants referred to a myriad of literacy strategies throughout the interviews; many discussed using multiple strategies after students were familiar with individually practiced strategies. Eleven (40%) clarified that they might teach a certain strategy with one of the books but they noted others that could also be introduced. Five teachers (19%) mentioned that they would not use all these approaches at once and would usually focus on a single strategy or reinforcement of several strategies depending on the purpose for reading the book. As she read *Daisy Comes Home* (Brett, 2002), second-grade Ridgeview teacher Debbie, explained:

Sometimes I do multiple strategies in a book, if they've [students] already been, if they've already had a lot of exposure to a lot of these strategies and we've done a lot of gradual release, then I would, I would, I could be doing more than one of these. During this story though, my thinking has changed a lot at this point, you know, from starting to thinking this was, this might be a good book for connections, I think that there's a lot of strategies you could use, you could plan for in this book. And that would depend on what my questions were throughout this book. [Book A]

Bayside first-grade teacher Ms. B. described how she uses “prediction,” one of the most popular strategies noted by the participants (particularly for Brett's (2002) book), as well as “inferences”:

I might ask the children what they think is going to happen, you know. This looks like a good spot for a prediction. And later in the school year, we talk about making inferences so, you know, using clues, things in the story so this could go with that. We could even stop reading here and have the kids write a little bit about what they think might happen and why, what do the clues tell them, and see if they're right; they always want to know if they're right. [Book A]

Debbie, a second-grade teacher from Ridgeview, wants her students to make meaningful predictions, not random guesses. As she explains:

And they [students] have to back up their thinking. So what in the story would make them predict that? So it has to be a meaningful prediction, something that would, you know, so they've learned that they really need to be able to kind of back up their prediction. [Book A]

Two teachers had used *Daisy Comes Home* (Brett, 2002) within their literacy curriculum but for two different purposes – one for guided reading and the other for writing sequence stories. Ridgeview second-grade teacher Nancy used the book in guided-reading sessions and thought it was appropriate for reading instruction but after being prompted to consider it for teaching social studies, she saw that it might be useful for content enrichment as well:

I may, umm, I'm trying to think back. I think we really just talked about umm, it was a group of lower readers and we were really focusing on setting, the problem, resolution umm and really retelling the story. I had not thought about it as much in terms of being a social studies book, actually. I hadn't thought about it that way or how it might connect with something like a *Supermarket*; I mean the market didn't really stand out to me, it just seemed like part of the story and Daisy getting lost was the problem. But it's interesting how you could take it and focus on that one aspect of it a little bit more. [Book A]

Clearview second-grade teacher Laura used *Daisy Comes Home* (Brett, 2002) for both content and literacy development, saying, “We use it in reading but we also use it in our neighborhoods, social studies, kind of combine them.” The literacy purposes included a writing project:

This one I've used for a writing, writing projects.....This is a great one for illustrations. Predicting what's going to happen, connecting things....When we use it in language arts we use predicting and the connections to how she felt with her pet. But then they write a new story. [Book A]

The strategy of “visualization” is an example of how teachers did not mention all of the things they do in their classroom; there may also be a limitation due to the labels used in categorizing or the terms used by the participants. The last interviewee was Jodi, a second-grade teacher from Riverview, who was the first one to use the term “visualize” as one of the processes she uses, in this case in conjunction with descriptive language. Eight others noted the use of descriptive language, which lends itself to visualizing, but only Jodi pointed it out as such, as she was reading *Daisy Comes Home* (Brett, 2002):

The descriptive language in this book is, I mean, for visualizing: *tipping, bobbing, watery world, sandy yard*, umm. [A10] The language is perfect for visualizing. I could see using this book and not showing the pictures the first time, it would make them crazy (it does when I do that. [A15]

Bayside first-grade teacher Ms. B. uses visualization but with first-grade terminology: “You know, this might be a good place, a lot of, well, in December, the comprehension skill we’re working on is umm creating mental images. So this could definitely tie into that.” [A10-A11]

Lakeview teacher Tracy often has her Kindergarteners draw a picture about a topic before reading books about the topic; this was coded as “activates prior knowledge” and “visualizing” even though the term was not used. Other teachers would utilize a different sense to spark their students’ imaginations. Westside Kindergarten teacher April discussed a segment of *Supermarket* (Krull, 2001): “Oh, this is fun. On this place we’d talk about the smells of the bakery. I’d have them close their eyes and try to imagine the smell of a doughnut” [C17]. Lakeview first-grade teacher Denise made a similar observation when she said, “I’d probably say at this point, ‘Oh, this is making me

hungry.’ Just imagine how good it would smell and all those yummy cookies and doughnuts and cakes” [C17].

**Factor 5.2 – Content Connections: All of the participants made some connections to content areas as they read each book.**

This category obviously overlaps with the content descriptions noted in Chapter 4, but these descriptions specifically refer to times that teachers would use the text to develop content activities or goals. There were numerous connections (448) made to specific content, including social studies, math, and science. Four teachers mentioned that they would do surveys (formal and informal) about items and 10 mentioned graphing, a math skill that can be applied to the social sciences. Lakeview second-grade teacher Anna explained she would tie a class survey into market research while reading *Supermarket* (Krull, 2001):

If you had previewed that you would know ahead of time why the shoppers pick a certain store, according to surveys. Why do you go to a certain store? And you could actually do a survey with them [students]. So, in some ways, I can kind of see this too there so many things with categories that we could use this in math class. We could do a quick survey with them, you know, thumbs up if you go to [Logan’s]? Why? Because it’s close to you? Or why do you go to Target? Because you have more choice? [Book C]

Content integration was a frequent topic noted by the participants. First-grade Lakeview teacher Denise saw the map on the end pages of *Grandpa’s Corner Store* (DiSalvo-Ryan, 2000) and this brought to mind her own mapping unit in math class. She noted that content can often be used together as she discussed how she develops map skills within math class:

We do a mapping unit in math, but not in social studies. It's a social studies outcome but we put it in math. Just because, we have more time that way. Or rather, people get overwhelmed if you say you're going to give them too much content but if you can integrate it, then not so much...It doesn't matter, right? Just that you do it, not what you call it. [Book B]

Closely related to content connections is the idea of building background knowledge about the content. Ridgeview second-grade teacher Michelle addressed the importance of this: "As I continue to read, I'm thinking that there are obviously some things that the kids would be very aware of and then there's other facts that maybe they hadn't thought of or didn't know." Riverview second-grade teacher Jodi explained how important it is to check what students know, and build on that:

It would be interesting before reading this book to see just how deeply they, kind of, all students have some background knowledge, just to see how deeply they have thought about it. You might think they haven't thought deeply about it but you might be surprised at what kids really know because there's all these, whether they know someone who works in a store, or they know someone who's a farmer, or they know someone who's a truck driver. They really might be...a lot of good background knowledge that they could build off of each other before you even read the book, which I think would help it stick a little bit.

Many teachers had such specific ideas of how they would work to build this background knowledge, including sharing their own experiences with their students. First-grade private school teacher Beth was reminded of her own childhood living in South America as she read *Daisy Comes Home* (Brett, 2002). She explained how she tries to bring her experiences in to enrich her students' understanding:

I would also talk about how in other cultures, because I grew up in Brazil and I know what it's like.... I would highlight that because I think that something that they [students] don't realize, you know, that this store has everything but where does it come from? It just shows up. Where does it come from? How does this hamburger get there? If I was teaching this, you know, as a unit, I'd probably bring some pictures from other countries too and just expose them to that, you

know, to see what it's like to get groceries. In the same unit, you know, tie it into how do they see things displayed in *Supermarket* or their own supermarket compared to here. Because that was very different for me but I experienced it. [Book A and Book C]

Likewise, Lakeview first-grade teacher Paige thought it was important for her students to be more aware of different cultures and to have an understanding of the responsibilities that children in other circumstances might have that they personally do not. Instead of shying away from the topic because her students would not have direct experience, Paige would take the opportunity to build background knowledge about the responsibilities and situations that children around the world may find themselves:

I would definitely mention, a lot of the kids today don't help with chores, you know, they don't help with the family business or things like that. When we were doing the Mexico unit we talked about what their jobs were at home compared to what the kids in Mexico did and they were just floored by all the things the kids in Mexico had to do. Here they would say, "What? Every Sunday she has to go help her grandpa?" That would be something that they don't understand the difference in culture, like helping out. [Book B]

**Factor 5.3 – Discussions and Questions: Almost all of the participants (26 of 27 [96%]) determined discussions (263 references) they would have and many (20 of 27 [74%]) specified questions (116 references) that they would ask their students as they read each book.**

Questions and discussions are used to build background knowledge, check comprehension, develop understanding, and expand students' thinking about content. Some questions that the participants described were low-level knowledge-based checks on what was happening in the story, but many were focused on deeper questions of

“why.” Discussions and questions enable the teacher to help students understand and think critically about what is being read.

Five teachers (19%) specifically noted that it was important that students understood the ideas and messages in each book. As Cheryl, a Lakeside Kindergarten teacher, read about Grandpa having to close his store (DiSalvo-Ryan, 2000) she said, “I guess we would talk about why, you have to understand why this is a big deal.” In addition, second-grade Greenville teacher Allison said, “We could talk about what does she mean by ‘bigger but not better?’ What’s the message of this story?” [Book B]

Participants made many references to times when they would engage students in discussion using statements such as “we’d talk about...” Lakeview Kindergarten teacher Tracy explained how she would expand understanding through discussion: “So then I would talk about, boys and girls, things that happen to you, help you learn, experiences that you have.”

Teachers offered hundreds of specific questions that they would use in connection with each of the books. Seven participants (26%) evaluated the books for whether or not they would use it for explicitly developing questioning skills. As Ridgeview second-grade teacher Debbie described:

I also think it would be great for questioning; lots of good questions throughout this book, you know. Not only the predicting questions but questions like: “From at the beginning, why do the other hens not accept Daisy?” To in the end, exactly, you know, “Why do they now accept her?” And that kind of thing, of understanding. [Book A]

Melody, a Clearview first-grade teacher, did the think-aloud task as a simulated read aloud as she would actually do with her students (including holding the book up in

read-aloud fashion, as did one pilot study participant). She created questions for almost every page, many of which were connected to calling attention to picture clues but also to making connections to things students had already experienced in class. Here is a sampling of her fast-paced questioning that would build social studies understanding as she read *Supermarket* (Krull, 2001):

Do you remember when we talked about rural and urban areas? Is this a rural area or an urban area?

Remember when we were reading that story about crayons and how crayons are made? Remember they put the crayons into boxes and then they put those boxes into big boxes and then they put them into trucks? Where do you think they're going to go to next?

Does this make you think of when we did our school store? How much money do some of these things cost, do you think? Would you have enough money with the amount of money you earned in the classroom with your pennies, nickels, and dimes? [Book C]

Melody made connections to prior learning to build on students' understanding.

She said that she always does this "with every book." Melody also used questions to develop critical thinking such as:

What do you notice about this kind of bike that we have? Why do they have this here? It's different than what we would have for transportation, right? Where we might use a car, they're using this little cart on the back of a bike. [Book A]

Why would they need a new supermarket in town? Right, if there's more people, they might need a bigger place, right? Maybe some people want more things. Do you think those are needs or wants? What kinds of things does the grandpa store have that the new supermarket doesn't have? [Book C]

Many other teachers' questions addressed student understanding and helping students to make connections. A focus in Dan's Kindergarten class in Northview is on recognizing the feelings of others (even animals) and building empathy:

And right on this page, I'd probably stop and say, you know, "How is she sleeping? How do you think she's feeling? Now what do you see is happening in her henhouse? How do you think the hens are feeling?" So talk about the characters' feelings. And talk about does she know what's happening to Daisy? And then make a text-to-self connection, "When you're sleeping do you think things are happening around you?" So we'd talk about that. [Book A]

Dan's last question was designed to push student thinking to a higher level and was something else he tried to focus on with his students:

There'd be a wide range of thinking for them...for where you hear their conversation and thoughts. And obviously I think what would happen too is it is differentiated enough to where your higher-level thinking also would really come in, so you can really expand on that. [Book C]

Some teachers liked to use "I wonder" questions (21 references from 8 teachers).

An example for this type of question came from Lakeview first-grade teacher Paige:

So this part I'd say here I'd say, "They say 'But it was not always this way.'" And I'd probably ask some "I wonder" questions as far as, "I wonder why it wasn't always this way? Or I wonder what it was like before?" [Book A]

Second-grade teacher Anna, also from Lakeview, provided the following take on the subject: "I'm big time into questioning. I don't tell them squat. [laughs] Everything goes through a question."

**Factor 5.4 – Literary Connections: All participants indicated that they would encourage text-to-self connections (176 times) as they were reading the texts, some modeling their own connections as examples. There were also 36 connections to other texts.**

Teachers made frequent connections from the text to their students, to themselves, and to other texts. Clearview second-grade teacher Laura said, "I make the connections too, I try to do that all the time to make a connection with the kids." Sometimes the

participants got caught up in the reading as exemplified by Lakeview Kindergarten teacher Tracy's comment: "And this is also an excellent opportunity, oh my gosh, this is so fun! You can open it up and there'd be an opportunity for text-to-self connections" [C16-C17].

Text-to-text connections were made with 36 references, such as did Ridgeview second-grade teacher Michelle as she read *Supermarket* (Krull, 2001):

Although I think about, there is a book that we read before..., *Smoky Night* [Bunting, 1994], that talks about a different ethnic group and having a particular store. And how, if you lived in a different place, what kinds of foods you might find, what other things you might find at a store, if you lived in a different community, a different kind of community. [Book C]

Teachers also wanted students to make connections to what they might do in the future. As Lakeview first-grade teacher Kelly read *Grandpa's Corner Store* (DiSalvo-Ryan, 2000), she noted that the girl took action and made things happen, even though she was very young. She wanted her students to make connections to what they could do:

So we could also talk about how just because you guys are in first grade doesn't mean, or it doesn't mean that you can't do anything, you know what I mean? You can do a lot. You have a big impact on people, just in the little things that you do. How can you be a part of a community? What can you do? [Book B]

Participants often referred to stopping and talking about what was happening and asking if anything similar had ever happened to the students as a way to develop empathy. An example of such came from Tracy, a Lakeview Kindergarten teacher:

I'd probably stop at this point and talk about another text-to-self connection, "Boys and girls, have you ever found something that doesn't belong to you? Then what have you, have you said finders keepers? And have you ever thought about how the other person might be feeling who lost it?" [Book A]

Allison, a second-grade teacher in Greenville, also wants to help her students make meaningful connections with the texts with teachable messages:

So again, what were the good things about her having that experience and what were the bad things? We could talk about perseverance; we talk about that with the kids to. Like if you come to a big mountain and just push through it and going up it and what's a time that you've had to persevere? What's a time that's been tough for you? This would be a good one for them to make their own connections to and write their own little story about that. [Book A]

The same book may be read for a variety of purposes and the connections that each student makes may be different, as noted by Northview Kindergarten teacher Dan:

And that's the one thing with children, hopefully, they learn too that just because we read it too for one concept, it doesn't mean we can't read it and look at something else. And that's that whole connection—well, you made a connection about the supermarket, this child made a connection about using money. [Book C]

There are some drawbacks to making connections. Allison joked about all the stories they can engender. First-grade Bayside teacher Ms. B. pointed out one of the issues with text-to-self connections in her classroom:

They don't have a hard time making text-to-self connections [laughs], just the most random things to remind them, or you know, the book reminds them of the most random things.... I talk to the kids sometimes, especially when we're making connections, everybody has something to share, and I say, you know, we don't want to break up the story too much, you know, because sometimes it takes us 10 minutes to get back. And I just tell them sometimes we just want to get into the flow of the story, you know, so we don't lose track of what's happening.

Connections of some form were noted by every teacher. Linda, a Kindergarten teacher from Southview, even got emotional reading *Grandpa's Corner Store* (DiSalvo-Ryan, 2000) but she admitted this was typical as she shared:

I get emotional so I'd probably be emotional reading this story and I'd say, and the kids lately have been saying, "Cry! Cry! Cry!" [laughs] I'm such an emotional person. I read a story and I'd probably be crying over this. [Book B]

**Factor 5.5 – Pictures: Most participants (20 of 27 [74%]) referred to encouraging students to make meaning from pictures (106 references). Many commented on the quality of the images and noted that this was important to their students’ appreciation of the text.**

Pictures were mentioned by most of the participants (20 of 27) as something that they evaluate and as something they encourage students to look at carefully to help them make sense of what they are reading. Eastfield second-grade teacher Grammy would ask her students, “Are you able to pick out the problem from the pictures?” As Lakeview first-grade teacher Kelly said, “The pictures really tell the story as well, I mean they tell the story. The words tell the story but the pictures are huge.”

Teachers use pictures to help them decide if the book is appropriate for their students. As Kelly further elaborated, “I’d look at the pictures, see what kids can connect to, what they’ve experienced before, if they can kind of relate to it so they have some background knowledge of what you’re going to be reading.”

Images help to draw students into the book, literally and figuratively, as discussed by Southside Kindergarten teacher Linda:

Oh, this is a nice colorful page; we’d talk also about all the nice colors. Umm and in this book I’d probably, and they usually sit on the rug, there’s so much detail in these pictures that I’d have them scoot up a little bit because they would want to see this. [C14-C15]

Teachers used the images in the texts to help build connections to what students have seen in their own lives. As Clearview Kindergarten teacher Vivian put it:

I think on this page it has umm good pictures for the kids to kind of identify: Have they've seen anything like this in their community? And how this is a little different from what we have. And we can try to compare and contrast different types of lifestyles and knowing that they live in China, how is that a little different from where we live and our, where we get our groceries, per se. [Book A]

The pictures might also be used to help determine genre. Several teachers noted that when their students see photographs in a book they consider the book to be informational text and that drawings or other images are the hallmark of a work of fiction. This appeared across the grade levels. As Lakeview first-grade teacher Denise described, "If they don't see real photographs, they'll say its fiction." Allison's second graders in Greenville are similarly disposed: "Usually they do go by the pictures and if it's photographs they think it's nonfiction." Lakeview Kindergarten teacher thought she would have to clarify the genre of *Supermarket* (Krull, 2001):

I would...talk about how this book is going to be a nonfiction book and talk about how it's not like our traditional nonfiction book, you know, how we have the table of contents and photographs. I do a lot of that. [Book C]

Teachers noted that realistic images can also cause confusion between fiction and nonfiction. Noting the quality of the illustrations of Brett (2002) in *Daisy Comes Home*, Lakeview first-grade teacher Kelly said:

If we were to do a unit study on China, we could like, just this book has so many pictures, I know it's a fiction story but so many pictures of real life things that obviously, I would assume, are in China and we could just talk about definitely the similarities, the differences. [Book A]

Second-grade Ridgeview teacher Nancy said that her students like the details of work such as Brett's (2002), and that she capitalizes on the details in such books to make meaningful connections with her class:

I'd stop and have them really analyze this picture and take a look at umm where they are and discuss, you know, their market is outside. They have carts and here we have eggs in baskets not in crates with expiration dates and big refrigerators, and umm, just how similar the foods are yet many how differently they're displayed than one they may be used to. [Book A]

The teachers were not asked to specifically comment on the pictures but many felt compelled to. Riverview second-grade teacher Jodi said it was what she typically did and added, "I feel like I'm such a primary teacher. I want to look at the pictures. Well, it's kind of that skill you teach kids for pre-reading." On the other hand, Northfield second-grade teacher Monitess said that she usually does not scrutinize the pictures: "Normally, I don't look at pictures like this. This is very interesting" [Book A].

Nine teachers, however, mentioned that they would take their students on "picture walks" as part of the pre-reading process that Jodi spoke of. Westside Kindergarten teacher April said, "We'd do a picture walk to preview the book and get them excited about what we will read."

Second-grade Lakeview teacher Anna uses picture walks to plan how she and her students will read a book: "And we might actually decide ahead of time, as I'm doing a quick little picture walk with them before we even start, that the book is really dense" [Book C]. She also described her students' enthusiasm for the illustrations, saying "They'd be all over me, trying to get their butts closer and closer to the reader once they start seeing the pictures" [Book B].

Rock View Kindergarten teacher Sharon uses picture walks for predictions and said, "Picture walks are always kind of fun with kids and they can kind of predict."

Greenville second-grade teacher Allison also uses picture books to preview texts and have students make predictions:

And we'd go through all the pictures, that what I'd usually do. Or I just kind of skim the book and we make predictions about what the story's about. So even just go to the first page, and I'd say, "Just looking at the first page, what predictions do you have?" Or we could be doing connections like "What do you think the book could be about?" and they'd say "Oh, I think it's going to be about like..."

**Factor 5.6 – Student Response: The majority of participants (24 of 27 [89%]) mentioned potential student responses to the text if they would read the books to their class.**

The student response category refers to affective responses students might give as the books were being read, as well as the questions they might ask; this type of response is in addition to the connections they would make. For example, Southside Kindergarten teacher Linda noted several times where students "would be very happy" or would make exclamations like "Oh, poor Daisy" or "Oh, that's too bad!" As noted previously, Linda shared that she gets very emotional with her reading of text, and she thinks her students pick up on this as she encourages this affect.

As seen in Linda's case, student responses can be linked to the culture that develops in the individual classroom. In another case, second-grade Lakeview teacher Anna's students are familiar with her affinity for cats, so they try to bring this in whenever there is a cat in the book. Anna said,

That's the first thing they'll say: "I know why we're reading this because there's a cat on it." ... And kids would stop and point out, because they're so funny, "There's a cat on that page."

Anna also described a range of emotions her students would go through reading *Daisy Comes Home* (Brett, 2002): “Oh, they would be devastated” to “They’d be like, yeah!”

Bayside first-grade teacher Ms. B. said that her current students are very demonstrative compared to other years. As she read *Grandpa’s Corner Store* (DiSalvo-Ryan, 2000), she pointed out that:

The class I had this year would probably cheer at this part. They get really into stories. [laughs] Even if the story has the word “dumb” in it or something, they’re like, I’ll read it and they’re like, Huhhhh! Totally scandalized, really dramatic little group this year. [Book B]

Teachers appeared attuned to their students’ responses and said things like “They usually pick that up” (Denise, Lakeview first-grade teacher) or “Whether a kid would come up with that, I don’t know” (Michelle, Ridgeview second-grade teacher). As noted in the findings about pictures, they were quick to identify features which they think would appeal to their students. Lakeview Kindergarten teacher Cheryl noted that the phrase “snorted loudly” would have her children in giggles after she would have them snort several times themselves.

Even informational text elicited affective responses. Many teachers noted times that their students “would love it,” such as Lakeside teacher Paige did, and that they would “really get into that,” such as Higher View teacher Tulip did; both teachers were describing their first-grade students’ reading *Supermarket* (Krull, 2001). Kindergarten teacher Gina, at Westside, noted what she thought her students would think of this same book: “I think they would laugh and think that this last page is funny.” Allison from

Greenville described her second-graders' reaction to descriptive words found in

*Supermarket* (Krull, 2001):

They would love that. They all have little word collectors; they'd be wanting to write these words down. So we'd talk about all the different words they'd use to describe it. What might be something *sweet* at the grocery store that you get? What's something *fabulous* that you get at the grocery store? Something *sour*?

Allison further described her students' reactions to Jan Brett's books:

And my kids love it. They love the illustrations. I had a lot of artistic kids last year that were super interested and they tried to make their own books. I told them to start with this part and then go back and take something from it. They have a good time with that. They love her books.

Some teachers keyed in on things that would overwhelm their students and were protective of such to a point. As Bayside first-grade teacher Ms. B. said about a discussion about teasing during *Daisy Comes Home* (Brett, 2002), "That would be too much for my little ones." On the other hand, her students would be able to follow other topics in the same text:

The kids would be so relieved that she found Daisy. And the kids would love this part as she kind of tricks the guy into giving her, or she kind of steals the hen back. And she takes the hen back and yells him, "Finders Keepers" like he yelled to her. They would like it, first grade justice. [laughs]

When reading *Supermarket* (Krull, 2001), Westside Kindergarten teacher April noted that "Some of this is too much for Kindergarten but a lot of it is good for them to see." Dan, another Kindergarten teacher, agreed that this book would overwhelm his students, saying "I just think for the time span, it's just too much for their age." Similarly, Rock View Kindergarten teacher Sharon thought that her students would be overwhelmed by part of the storyline in *Grandpa's Corner Store* (DiSalvo-Ryan, 2000),

that emphasized the big store displacing the little store, saying “That’s a pretty big issue for, you know, I might not necessarily bring that out.”

**Factor 5.7 – Evaluate Text: All participants considered the genre of the books, and many (13 of 27 [48%]) mentioned looking for informational texts to bring into their curriculum.**

Participants were asked to estimate the percentage of fiction, nonfiction, and informational texts in their classroom library. The percentage of informational text ranged from a low of 10% to a high of 40%; nonfiction narratives (such as biographies) accounted for 5-30% of the books. Teachers’ estimates of the number of books in their classroom libraries ranged from 200 to 3,000, with an average of 914 books per teacher. Two teachers, Michelle and Debbie, were neighbors at Ridgeview; both estimated that they had 3,000 books, and each had classroom shelves on two full sides of their second-grade classrooms.

The three books included only one informational text, *Supermarket* (Krull, 2001), and all of the teachers noted that it was such. Many of the teachers took different approaches to the informational text than the two fictional narratives. This book had the most disagreement about whether or not the teacher would use it in their classroom. Kindergarten teacher Dan at Northview, thought this particular text would be “too much” for his students because of the amount of information and time it would take. Second-grade teacher Anna at Lakeview said that she really would be building on background knowledge to work in *Supermarket* instead of just saying “I just read this really cool book,” because “the title doesn’t appeal to me in that way. It’s not something that has a

story.” Another second-grade teacher, Debbie at Ridgeview, was also hesitant about reading the informational text:

Okay, if I were to read this book, you know, I can't really honestly, to be honest with you, I can see myself reading this book and explaining it to the kids while you're reading a book like this, a lot of times the text features and some of things that are in the story, umm are things that you can read for factual information.  
[Book C]

Debbie clarified that she would try to teach her students how to approach informational text by focusing on text features:

I just think if I'm doing a read aloud I wouldn't necessarily read all these to my kids. And I would explain to them that lots of times, boys and girls, when you read a book and you're reading the main portions of the book, a lot of time you're going to see little features, whether that's going to be a caption or a text box or a dialog or whatever, speech bubbles. That you would, you might not always read everything because a lot of that is just factual information that's supporting your reading in a nonfiction book. [Book C]

Still others saw it differently. Rock View Kindergarten teacher Sharon would have her students decide if *Supermarket* (Krull, 2001) was fiction or nonfiction and thought the book would be useful preparation for a field trip to a grocery store. Others made similar observations. Linda at Southside thought her Kindergarteners might need help with the vocabulary but otherwise thought it was “a good one!” Gina at Bayside would focus on teaching about the layout, as she stated: “I think this book, the text is laid out different. So I think talking about that is important too. It looks like it's kind of a factual book that facts are interjected throughout” [Book C]. Others also saw the text as a way to build understanding about how to read about facts. Katy at Eastfield thought she would use this book to teach her Kindergarteners about informational text:

I might discuss like more on a literature piece, how to read a book like this. How do you go about looking at the pictures, reading the graphics, and captions? Not really as a read aloud. If I do use it as a read aloud, I try to pick the important pieces because it gets to be too long to read all of the little pieces. But more, again, like a guided reading or a shared reading kind of lesson. [Book C]

Another Kindergarten teacher, Cheryl at Lakeview, thought that the informational text would require two different readings and said, “In this I’d probably, in at least the first reading, you know, you’d just read the simple parts because otherwise, you’d get bogged down with umm the details.” Tracy, also at Lakeview, also would take more time to read the book but worried about the level of details:

I’d probably with this age group, I would take a couple of days with this book. I probably maybe would stick one or two facts that comes out today, maybe little blurps and I’d read more of the storyline, you know, at the bottom. And then come back and say, let’s read this book again and then say there’s some fun little facts that the author’s put in. I just think for the time span is just too much for their age.

Tracy further described how important nonfiction is in her classroom:

We’ll teach them how you read differently with fiction book than a nonfiction book. You read for different reasons and, you know, all that. Starting to kind of expose them to those thoughts; so I think it’s so important at this age to let them understand the difference between fiction and nonfiction.

Teachers tended to focus on how they would help students to make sense of the informational text. Lakeview first-grade teacher Paige discussed how important informational text and nonfiction is to their curriculum, emphasizing the need to purposefully teach how to read and interpret this type of text

There’s lots of important information [points to Chavez info] that we would miss if we didn’t read some of these things here. [Book C, pg. C8]

*J: Do you use informational text in your classroom?*

We try to do a lot. We did a 4-week unit on nonfiction and we focused on all different nonfiction features. And then in all their reading they find them with post-it notes and then they use it, we also connect it to our writing and we wrote nonfiction pieces with table of contents and things like that. So I love teaching nonfiction so I think it's so fun but unless you teach it they will just, my kids will skip, you know, they'll just read the main things, they'll just keep reading and they don't look at all these things, which is how you get all of your information. [Book C]

**Factor 5.8 – Reading Practice: The majority of participants (24 of 27 [89%]) planned to use each of the three books as a read aloud for their class; several mentioned also using the books in guided reading or in shared reading time because of the layout of the text or the content.**

The majority of participants (89%) noted that they could use any of the three books as reading instruction. Many would use each of the three books as a read aloud for their class and several mentioned also using the books in guided reading or in shared reading time because of the layout of the text or the content. As described above, two teachers, Dan and Debbie, said that they would not use Book C, *Supermarket* (Krull, 2001), as a read aloud. Katy, a Kindergarten teacher from Eastfield, would use the text with shared or guided reading but “not really as a read aloud.”

### **Questionnaire Data on Reading Practices**

Information on the reading practices of the participating teachers comes from their responses during the think-aloud task, discussion after the think aloud, and from the completed questionnaire. All teachers said that they read aloud to their students every day but as seen in the questionnaire data described below, there are similarities and

differences in how this practice is enacted in the individual classroom. The questionnaire included three questions regarding reading experiences in their classroom:

1. How do you use children's literature or trade books in your classroom?
2. How often do you read aloud to your students in your classroom?
3. Please describe how you usually prepare, if at all, for reading aloud to your class.

### **Use of Children's Literature or Trade Books**

From responses on the questionnaire, teachers indicated that they used children's literature within their classroom in several ways, many of which focused on reading instruction, such as shared, guided, and independent reading and for content instruction. These responses were made before the participants knew that the research focus was on social studies. Many teachers also cited using children's literature to engage students in learning. Hillside Academy first-grade teacher Beth stated, "I use trade books on a regular basis to get children excited about literature." Beth's counterpart at another private school, Tulip at Higher View, elaborated on this idea but added a caveat:

Books are used to enrich, motivate, extend, entertain, excite, peek [sic] curiosity. Books themselves are not the curriculum. They support the skills and concepts appropriate for successful 1<sup>st</sup> grade learning.

Sandy, a first-grade teacher at Lakeview, wrote that she used children's literature for "Enjoyment and to meet curriculum standards." Kelly, another first-grade teacher at Lakeview, wrote that:

I use children's literature in my classroom as an introduction to different genres, a way to teach strategies in reading (look at pictures, say the first sound, decoding

etc.), teach students how to make predictions, connections, inferences and also just for FUN!

Linda, a Westside Kindergarten teacher, uses children's literature "Every day for Language Arts and then also for other subjects like Math, Science, Health, and Social Studies. In Kindergarten we teach social skills so of course I read many books for that."

Lakeview second-grade teacher Anna replied with a list of ways she uses children's literature:

- As read alouds to enrich students' listening/reading experience
- As introductions to units and primary resources throughout units of study
- As leveled readers during guided reading/readers' workshop – literature circles
- As examples for genre studies
- As inspirations for more affective discussions – ex. being a friend, building a community of learners
- As examples of a particular author's / illustrator's work
- Books are available for independent reading

Ridgeview second-grade teacher Michelle replied that "I use literature and trade books in all curricular areas. I teach using the gradual release process through interactive read alouds. I also use literature for small group instruction in reading." Likewise, Ms. B., a first-grade teacher at Bayside wrote: "I use books all the time! They are helpful to introduce concepts, reinforce concepts, or give kids a jumping off point for discussions. I use them in every area of the curriculum."

During our discussion about curriculum, two teachers made mention of their purposeful use of literature. Second-grade Lakeview teacher Anna said, "Every moment, our days are so packed, that every moment that we are doing something, it's pretty darn

close to intentional learning. So I'm thinking, 'What is the purpose of me reading this?'"

Similarly, Melody, a first-grade teacher at Clearview, said,

I was just going to say that our days are crammed so pack so it's like to read something for fun these days just doesn't happen so I would think, if I'm going to read a book I have to be able to say like why I'm reading it. Like if your principal walked by and said "Why are you reading that?" I'd be able to say "well, let me tell you!"

### **Time Devoted to Read Alouds**

The participants reported the time that they do read alouds varied, even within the same grade and school. All participants noted that they did read alouds every day. An average of 27 minutes per day was reported as shown in the table in Appendix O (Note: Not all participants answered this question).

### **Preparation for Reading Aloud**

The participants offered a range of approaches to preparing for read alouds. Second-grade Clearview teacher Laura emphatically stated "I don't prepare," while second-grade Eastfield teacher Grammy simply said she will "Read them!" Tulip, a first-grade teacher at Higher View, prepares by "linking the themes/concepts/skills." Second-grade teacher Sandy, at Lakeview, wrote that she will "Read the book, if I am not familiar with it. Usually I am already choosing the book for a specific reason." Hillside Academy first-grade teacher Beth gets literature ready by themes as well:

When planning units in both reading and science, I try to match literature with the themes for both units of study. Usually when I prep for the coming unit, I look at the recommended titles and request them electronically from the public library. This enables me to have enough time to request them and for them to arrive at the library.

First-grade teacher Paige, at Lakeview, along with many others, will read the book prior to the read aloud, as she plans how she will do a think aloud. She wrote:

I almost always read the book prior to reading it to my class. This way I can better model my thinking to my students. If I am focusing on certain comprehension strategies then my preparation will be longer. I also like my modeling to be authentic and real so sometimes I don't want to over prepare.

Lakeview first-grade teacher Kelly describes how she has different preparation depending on the type of book she is reading:

“Just for fun” books I don't prepare. If I am working with a certain strategy for decoding I prepare a small mini lesson. If I am working on predictions (etc.) I will come up with a short activity to go with that particular lesson. Prep time: 15-20 minutes which includes previewing the book.

Southside Kindergarten teacher Linda generally follows the reading curriculum guides:

It depends if it is during my Language Arts time. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt has scripted lessons that start with talking about the author and illustrator, giving a brief summary of the book, going on a picture walk, asking questions on each page, talking about if it is an informational text or fiction, then reading the story asking questions along the way. Other times I am not as scripted and we have fun with the book by reading it and discussing it afterwards. Sometimes we write or do a project about the book to extend the lesson.

Second-grade Lakeview teacher Anna wrote that she prepares by “DEFINITELY, prereading the book.” She also states that she pays attention to “Selecting a book that is appropriate for the intended purpose” and she thinks it is important for “Being prepared to explain why we are reading the book and talking about the pros and cons of the book.”

Michelle, a Ridgeview second-grade teacher, is also purposeful in her planning:

I also choose my read alouds for a specific purpose. I read the text and prepare post-it notes to reading, so I know where I want to stop, ask questions, or share

my thinking. Students often pair-share during a reading lesson to share their own thinking.

Kindergarten teacher Dan at Northview noted that he prepares with his students: “We talk about predicting, telling, and making connections. I also integrate a lot of our content area into our reading.” Another Kindergarten teacher, Tracy at Lakeview, said “I will pre-read at times and place sticky notes in book.” Bayside Kindergarten teacher Gina said that “If a new book I will read through and select what it is I want to focus on (e.g. character, setting, problem, solution, rhyming words, etc.).”

First-grade Bayview teacher, Ms. B., a licensed reading teacher and the participant who averages the most read aloud time in her daily schedule (67 minutes over 2-4 times per day), described her preparation as follows: “Depending on my goal for the lesson, I will pre-read stories to make notes about the important points I want to make. Usually about 10 minutes of prep per lesson.”

Monitess, a second-grade teacher in Northfield, explained that she does not always read the books beforehand: “Sometimes I don’t—I want to show surprise. Others I read the story and figure out the focus.”

### **Chapter Summary**

The findings of this chapter address the second question: What planning processes do teachers in the primary grades utilize as they preview children’s literature for use in teaching social studies? The main finding relating to planning processes is that the teachers looked for ways to use texts for multiple purposes including (1) to develop literacy skills, (2) to make content connections, (3) for discussions, (4) to make literary

connections, and (5) to make meaning from pictures. Teachers also mentioned anticipated student responses, how they would evaluate text, and the reading experiences (mainly read alouds) that they would use with the three books.

## Chapter 6

### Needing Time and Resources – Findings Related to Curriculum

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore with 27 primary-grade teachers their perceptions of teaching social studies with children's literature. This included an examination of what the teachers view as the factors that guide or constrain the curriculum they can enact in their classrooms. The findings detailed in this chapter address the third research question: What factors do teachers perceive influence their teaching of social studies in the primary grades? During their interviews, the 27 participants provided brief glimpses into their social studies instructional practices. Their descriptions varied in terms of time available, curriculum covered, connections to literature or integration, administrative guidelines (mandates, standards), and individual perceptions of the content area. The main finding regarding curriculum is that all participating teachers had limited time available for teaching social studies but would utilize children's literature to teach social studies if their curriculum allowed it.

#### Time Crunches and Curriculum Demands

After the think-aloud task, participants answered questions about their curriculum, particularly focused on teaching social studies; some also offered comments throughout the think-aloud task. There are six supporting factors relevant to the main finding regarding curriculum:

1. **Limited Time Available:** All 27 participants reported that they had limited time for social studies, with eight of nine Kindergarten teachers having no time allotted for social studies in their schedules.

2. **Integration of Social Studies:** All 27 participants said that they try to integrate social studies within their literacy curriculum.
3. **Social Studies Curriculum:** All 27 participants had social studies curriculum developed by others, either by committee in the school district (for the public schools) or with other teachers in the school (for the two private schools). There were similar topics covered at different grade levels, which 11 participants linked to state standards.
4. **Literacy Demands:** A majority of participants (17 of 27 [63%]) mentioned that their reading curriculum focused the way they use literature to teach social studies.
5. **Selection of Literature for Social Studies:** Many participants (19 of 27 [70%]) mentioned their efforts to find appropriate literature for teaching social studies.
6. **Individual Perceptions:** Individual perceptions of teaching social studies varied, with some teachers (7 of 27 [26%]) expressing their concern for the lack of social studies; only one teacher ranked social studies as a favorite subject to teach. Fourteen teachers selected reading, four selected language arts, and two selected writing as their favorite subject to teach (20 of 27 [74%]) preferred a language arts subject).

The participant responses regarding curriculum were analyzed using verbal analysis (Chi, 1997). Data from the curriculum discussions were tabulated and quantified where this was feasible and aided understanding.

**Factor 6.1 – Limited Time Available: All 27 participants reported that they had limited time for social studies with eight of nine Kindergarten teachers having no time allotted for social studies in their schedules.**

Every teacher mentioned some aspect of time constraints with regard to teaching social studies. There was a range of responses about how much time was spent with social studies, but almost half (48%) indicated that they did social studies about 30 minutes a day, alternating with science or health units (5 first-grade teachers and 5 second-grade teachers or 37%) or just alternating with science (1 first-grade and 2 second-grade teachers or 11%). Accounting for the rotational schedule, the average length of time spent specifically on social studies education was 9 minutes per day or 45 minutes per week. Eight teachers reported they did not have time for social studies in their schedules (all Kindergarten teachers); of these, three teachers said there was no time to make room for social studies. The other five said they incorporated social studies into their reading but were unable to estimate the time spent. Only one Kindergarten teacher (Linda) reported having social studies in the weekly schedule (20-30 minutes per day, three times per week, alternating with science and health). Most first-grade teachers had 30 minutes per day alternating with science or science and health. One second-grade teacher reported doing the most with 30 minutes per day while two first grade teachers from a private school reported doing social studies for 30 minutes per day for three days a week. A table outlining the reported time available for social studies is provided in Appendix P.

Half-day Kindergarten teachers seemed to be particularly strapped for time for teaching social studies. Bayside teacher Gina said, “Social studies and half-day Kindergarten just doesn’t go.” Lakeview teacher Cheryl explained, “We just don’t have time in half-day. We’re lucky if we get all snow gear off in time to have a story.” Eastfield teacher Katy said “We don’t even get to play in half-day” but described how social studies may come in through books read because:

In half-day, social studies is not kind of like, not as important. So when I can get to it, you know, read alouds are a big part of what I do. I try to incorporate a theme in our shared reading and activities based on what our theme is. And more like a real world application....Three days a week they get themed-based activities which is our shared reading, social studies, science, and everything else.

A full-day Kindergarten teacher, Sharon, described how she incorporates social studies when the schedule does not have a specific time:

I get *Weekly Reader* and that has a lot of social studies ideas and then I’ll go further with those, you know, if it’s Martin Luther King, you know, that will be the thing and I’ll do a little bit more with that. But it’s not like I have a 30 minute slot every day for social studies or science.

First-grade teacher Beth, who works in a private school, shared that time was also at a premium there. She explained why she uses literature to increase her students’ exposure to social studies: “It’s hard because I think time-wise, it’s a time crunch because if it’s not associated with a unit, the likelihood of us having exposure to it is less. I get exposure through my children’s literature.”

First-grade teacher Tulip, who also works in a private school, finds ways to incorporate social studies throughout the day: “I do social studies three times a week, officially. But social studies is in everything almost.”

The teacher who had the most time available was Grammy, a second grade teacher from Eastfield. She was the only teacher of the 27 who had a social studies textbook to use in her classroom. She also described how she incorporates social studies throughout the day:

It's supposed to be 20, well, it would be a half of an hour but we tend to do themes like our kind of social studies unit and umm so I work on it every single day for a half of an hour and sometimes, if it's really a big thing that's going to be for more time, I incorporate it in all the subject areas....There really aren't enough minutes in the day to teach everything we're supposed to teach so if you didn't umm use other subject time, we wouldn't get the other concepts in.

Tulip and Grammy each have 37 years of experience teaching. Both teachers said time for social studies has always been limited but that they try to bring it in throughout the day. Both believe that social studies can be integrated in multiple ways.

Having time on the schedule does not always mean that it is used specifically for social studies. Second-grade teacher Allison, finishing her second year of teaching in Greenville, was particularly frustrated with the time devoted to social studies in her school. While she tries to do as much social studies as she can in her classroom, her colleagues do not spend the same amount of time:

I do a half an hour to 35 minutes, and I don't get to do it every day. We have to do science, social studies, and health. With how much reading and math we do, it's kind of limiting. I had to make time. I don't know what other people are doing with that time, if they're doing extra reading or what, cause I'm still doing the minimal of what they say to do.... So this is something that I've been struggling with because, and there are teachers who don't teach science or social studies. They don't teach it. And like today we were looking at our schedules for next year and I'm saying, "Oh, this is a great time for me to do my science-social studies-health every day," you know, for 35 minutes because that's a time, that's a priority, you make time for it. And one of the teachers said, "I'll just do it on the days that I don't have specials." Which would be two times a cycle, for a half an

hour. And there's some teachers who say, "Oh I don't teach it." Or then they just say, "Oh I don't have time to teach it."

**Factor 6.2 – Integration of Social Studies: All 27 participants said that they try to integrate social studies within their literacy curriculum.**

All participants described efforts to integrate social studies with their literacy efforts. This was most often cited as a means of efficiency. Tulip, a first-grade teacher in a private school, referred to this integration: "social studies overlaps so much...in first grade, everything links so much, hugely!" Another first-grade teacher, Melody from Clearview, referred to being "able to pull some of those key components...because you just don't have that much time to spend on it otherwise." Dan, a Kindergarten teacher from Northview, indicated that integration was the only way that social studies happened:

To do it separate, especially with our half-day Kindergarten setting is pretty hard. So you have to integrate a lot of things umm and tie it with it, and so when I'm doing a read aloud it might also be to tie some of those things with our social studies, cause I know I won't have as much time because I know I have to get to the reading, the math, and the language arts, the writing.

Denise, a first-grade teacher in Lakeview, described integration as a way to "get more bang for our buck." She also said that map skills were actually incorporated into the math curriculum in order to efficiently address social studies and math standards. She pointed out that "It doesn't matter...just that you do it, not what you call it."

Riverview Kindergarten teacher Sharon explained her district's expectation for integration:

So like they want us to, basically we're teaching science and social studies within the language arts.... Mostly what I'll do, I bring it in through literacy, through guided reading books, umm and read alouds, and then I'll have specific units.

A similar sentiment was expressed by Tracy, a Lakeview Kindergarten teacher:

When I get to do social studies, I do it during my shared reading time. And so I just integrate it, like my big books and everything, we've integrated it throughout. Whenever I would do my shared reading block, sometimes it's social studies.

Another Kindergarten teacher, Linda from Westside, described how social studies is naturally integrated in her classroom:

I think that throughout the day, I don't say "Oops, it's language arts so I'm only doing this. It's social studies, I'm only doing this. At math time, I'm only doing this." I think that I just do it all day. And if I'm reading a social studies type book in the morning at literacy time, it's social studies too. It's just all information for the kids.

Bayside first-grade teacher, Ms. B., explained how she integrates social studies:

It depends how we can fit it into the day. You know, being a first grade teacher we have a lot of leeway with what part of the day we do stuff so it can be sometimes, like we did some writing about the Mayflower and a lot of times I did that actually during my writing block for that time, instead of during the dedicated social studies time because between reading the book and then also talking about it enough for the kids to write about it, it takes longer than 30 minutes. And it's kind of nice actually to kind of visit the ideas all day through, you know, so they have multiple exposures to it so.

Some teachers discussed the importance of literacy to social studies. Paige, a first grade teacher in Lakeview, said literacy skills helped social studies learning "because if they're not understanding what the story is even about how could they possibly focus on something that happened long ago or have that connection." At the same time, several described integration as an efficient but not necessarily effective way of addressing both literacy and social studies goals. As Jodi, a second-grade Riverview teacher, said:

We've had some interesting conversations about this because there's a desire to make things more integrated because we just need to cover more. It's this time crunch. So we need to use this and get all of these things out of it. And one of the things we struggled with, with the literacy part, is you are explicitly teaching

ways to think about a book, umm strategies that readers use and all of those things. And so you can't do all of those things and explicitly teach social studies content.

**Factor 6.3 – Social Studies Curriculum: All 27 participants had social studies curriculum developed by others, either by committee in the school district (for the public schools) or with other teachers in the school (for the two private schools). There were similar topics covered at different grade levels, which 11 participants linked to state standards.**

Both during and after the think-aloud process, teachers made comments about their curriculum. Most comments were in response to direct questions, but others were made within the context of the books being read. Different teachers described a variety of topics as part of the curriculum plans they used. Plans were typically created by the school district (mentioned by 11 participants but found in each school district); only the three private school teachers mentioned that they created their plans with their grade level team members.

Kindergarten teachers (most without dedicated, scheduled time for social studies) described some topics covered at that grade level. Linda from Southside, the only Kindergarten teacher with social studies in her schedule, mentioned bringing in guest speakers to learn about community helpers in her classroom. Tracy from Lakeview said, "I'm required to cover everything that the full-day does; it's the same text [school district-supplied curriculum book]. I'm required to do the same." Tracy's colleague, Cheryl, explained that the curriculum entailed national symbols: "I think it's one of our standards...so we've been hitting like a symbol every couple days. We got our Liberty

Bells over there, and the eagle, and the Statue of Liberty” (pointing to construction-paper projects students had created).

Half-day Kindergarten teachers from the Westside school district highlighted a difference in how teachers incorporated social studies. April described a “rather old” curriculum that she tried to use even with her tight schedule: “But any chance I get, I have to bring in the social studies. It’s kind of nice to bring in community people too, like what their jobs are, and what they can do too in the community.” Another Westside teacher, Vivian, said that there were no standards so social studies was not taught in Kindergarten:

I do half-day Kindergarten and since I don’t have to meet any standards in social studies, like we have our standards but we don’t necessarily have clear-cut, they need to know their letters, sounds, their numbers—there’s none of that in the social studies right now in the Kindergarten.

Katy explained how it worked in Eastfield: “We don’t actually have a curriculum. We do have a book that we could use, can use as support, but there is no like district-mandated social studies curriculum for Kindergarten.” Dan, a Kindergarten teacher in Northview, knew he had to address social studies standards but that there was no curriculum for social studies nor time in the schedule: “They’re putting more on your plate but they’re not taking anything away and they add the new standards but you still have to do everything else.”

First-grade teachers had more things to say about the specifics of their curriculum. Three private school teachers from two different schools did their own curriculum development with other teachers in their school. As Beth explained, “We kind of

compiled our own. Like we have a curriculum map [created by previous teachers] that we follow and we tend to follow more, you know, the Pilgrims, Native Americans, and we introduce, umm, Martin Luther King, umm, even Lincoln, Washington.” Tulip, who teaches with Jessie at another private school, described how their curriculum included many walking field trips around the Lakeview community to see businesses, government buildings, and the town layout. They also “just built [units] around themes like economics and patriotism and Mexico and Canada and culture.” They augmented their curriculum with Junior Achievement, a non-profit organization that sends community volunteers to classrooms to promote community building and economics education.

Public school teachers from Lakeview said that their district created their social studies curriculum. In Kindergarten, this included national symbols. In first grade, they focused on mapping, Mexico, and families. In second grade, the curriculum centers on state symbols, families, and culture. Second-grade teacher Anna noted that there were new state standards in social studies so the curriculum will be changed “in the next couple of years.” First-grade teacher Sandy expounded on the particulars:

We do a little bit on immigration, families. You know, a lot of times, it’s around the holidays when we’ll do a lot about families. And the mapping, we’ll talk about communities, and stuff. But most of the curriculum is not bought curriculum, it’s been made up in our district, whoever’s on the committee. So there’s a list of books, the picture books that we are to use and stuff. It’s not a series that we purchased or anything. They provide the books then too. Then over the years, you’ve collected books, too, you know.

Both Paige and Kelly explained that the curriculum plan comes with 8-10 books that go with each unit. Denise described some specifics of the plan, which includes lessons for different days:

It's all set up. If you want to go further, there's always supplemental stuff. There's wants and needs. And it's just set out. Here's our mapping: So day one you do, well you spend more than one day on this big book, and just some stuff to point out and when you do it. So it's all pretty much, it's pretty specific. There's another big book and the parts you are supposed to do.

Lakeview second graders in Anna's class have units on the local community, state symbols, and land. They also learn about cultures. Anna said that most of the curriculum is taught with children's literature, but she expressed a desire to have Junior Achievement again in her classroom (the school had it "years ago") because "it was more hands-on" and "those kids all walked away remembering that as opposed to you talk and you talk and you talk kind of social studies."

Just ten miles away, first graders at Bayside in Ms. B.'s class do things that are similar to the content of the three different grade levels in Lakeview:

We do mapping. We do a unit about [our] state symbols, like the state bird and all that stuff. And then a lot at the beginning of the year, you know, community building, friendships, working together in a classroom, you know, different jobs of people in the school, you know, teacher, kitchen jobs, principal, that kind of stuff. And, let me think, we do Native Americans and Pilgrims, you know, at Thanksgiving. We do some holidays around the world around Christmas time.

In Westside, the community next to Bayside, Clearview first-grade teacher Melody also includes a variety of topics in her social studies teaching:

We do needs and wants, we do our mapping unit. We do communities, and I do kind of more community in my classroom; it's not necessarily social studies. We do time long ago, compared to now. And what else do we do? Part of our mapping unit, we do the different components and we do the *Flat Stanley* [Brown, 1964] project where we send it and get to learn about different places. It just kind of varies each year where they go.... It's kind of more as I can. We have a curriculum to get through so we use *Social Studies Alive!* [Teachers' Curriculum Institute (TCI), 2010]

Clearview second-grade teacher Laura also uses *Social Studies Alive!* (TCI, 2010) that she said includes communities, wants and needs, regions, and “a version of history.” Clearview Kindergarten teacher Vivian also taught about communities. All three teachers from Clearview taught at different grade levels but each covered “communities” in their social studies; they each seemed unaware of what other grade levels covered in social studies. The first and second grade teachers at Clearview have some printed teacher resources but do not use student textbooks. This curriculum comes with “Literature Connections,” a suggested list of children’s literature to use with each lesson, but these were not noted by the teachers. This series uses the expanded horizons curriculum, typical in the elementary social studies (Barton, 2009) with different topics for each grade; at Clearview, however, there is an overlapping emphasis on communities in different grade levels.

Teachers interviewed in a neighboring state had a similar curriculum even though they did not use a published curriculum. The teachers noted that their curriculum maps were aligned with the state standards. Debbie, Michelle, and Nancy all taught second grade at Ridgeview Elementary and described their curriculum in the same way. As Michelle detailed:

Actually our social studies curriculum is just like historic heroes, so we learn about people and their backgrounds and how, what was happening in the world that influenced who they are, and why they’re important, why do we recognize them?... We have like 28 of them. We have your unit on community, you have your unit on maps and continents.... knowing our continents and oceans, you know, map skills, reading a map. We have the Junior Achievement, which is only a unit on community and economics.

Jodi taught second grade in the same school district as Debbie, Michelle, and Nancy, but in a different school. Her description of her curriculum was virtually the same as Michelle's except that she did not mention Junior Achievement. Monitess taught second grade in a neighboring town in the same Riverview school district and described the same things as Jodi. In Greenville, a town 20 miles from Riverview (a different school district), Allison detailed similar items except she referred to learning about "famous Americans" instead of "historic heroes." These teachers were aware of what was covered in lower grades, and they had clearly defined ideas of what they needed to cover in their grade level. Details regarding curriculum topics mentioned by participants can be found in Appendix Q; this is not necessarily a complete listing and only represents the information provided by the teachers, not the school district.

The primary grades (K-2) do not have high-stakes testing as upper grades do but several teachers mentioned that accountability measures have focused attention on literacy and math. As first-grade teacher Beth said, "Social studies is considered to be more of a minor [focus], at this point, compared to the reading and math. That's our primary academic work." Eleven teachers noted their state standards but more in passing, such as "I think that's one of our standards." Tests were only mentioned a few times but Allison, who had expressed dismay over the level of social studies in her school, linked tests to this issue:

I think things are so skewed with test scores for reading and math that people have lost sight of creating good citizens that know and have the knowledge and have the resources that they need, the background.

**Factor 6.4 – Literacy Demands: A majority of participants (17 of 27 [63%])**

**mentioned that their reading curriculum focused the way they use literature to teach social studies.**

Many teachers mentioned that while they like to bring lots of literature into their classroom, but there were constraints that limit how they use the literature. For example, Michelle, Debbie, and Jodi, second-grade teachers in Riverview, each had large classroom libraries but new curriculum demands of the district have changed how they have used their literature selection. However, each teacher did see some value in the constraints, as second-grade teacher Jodi explained:

Last year when we adopted the *Making Meaning* [Developmental Studies Center, 2010] curriculum one of the things at the second grade level is that we always spend a couple of days on the book. . . . There are so many great books so I was using a different text every day, [but] I can really see the value in rereading and modeling that for my students. Like a book shouldn't be read once; it should be read two, three, four times, you know, they're worth it. . . . There's about 30 texts but it's only three days a week curriculum and so there's two days that you supplement. And they have suggested reading, you also have a list of what was used in first grade, second grade, and what's going to be used in third through fifth; so you don't use other people's—so if I used something that was used in first grade, it's okay because I'm aware. But I wouldn't want to use something that's going to be used in third grade for making predictions. That wouldn't be good. That was the problem we had without having the *Making Meaning* curriculum.

Several other teachers from different school districts described how a recently adopted language arts curriculum was changing their teaching. In Bayside and Greenville, teachers were using *Good Habits, Great Readers* (Fisher, Klein, & Frey, 2007), which outlined the list of books used by the teachers for teaching reading and writing strategies. Similar to the *Making Meaning* (Developmental Studies Center, 2010)

curriculum, teachers are to use the books for the three days a week that the curriculum is used, but may supplement on other days.

Other teachers mentioned how purposeful their book selections were. Clearview first-grade teacher Melody explained that she no longer reads “anything for fun” because “every book must fit into the curriculum or meet some standards as there are too many requirements.” First-grade teacher Paige, from Lakeview, explained that she had “a lot of different resources that tell about different books to use for different strategies, like this is a great book for, you know, questioning and this is a great book for predicting.” She follows the resources that focus on literacy development even if the book has social studies ideas, but she tries to bring social studies concepts in whenever she can.

Several teachers mentioned that their literacy curriculum was mapped out by their school district, but was based on the published reading curriculum purchased by the school district. Teachers said that they needed to adhere to this format. Second-grade teacher Jodi said that her district’s curriculum maps do not allow for integration:

You’re not allowed to do anything else for reading or writing, you know, there’s a map for that. You follow the map...to teach the reading strategy has to be the focus. So there’s not a lot of time to focus on the content. You’d try to build some background knowledge but it moves along at a pretty good clip. And it’s really about being laser sharp on your teaching.

The reading curriculum was discussed as a mandate limiting or focusing teacher attention to reading or writing only, even if there was content specific to social studies. Second-grade teacher Allison, from Greenville, describes how the district’s reading curriculum constrains integration:

You don't talk about the social studies part. You would talk about, like we have one that's like "People Come From Everywhere" – I don't know the exact title but it's something along that line and it does have to do with communities – but you don't talk about that. And it's like you wouldn't read that story and then you'd choose two to compare in a Venn diagram, which would be perfect. But that's not what it's for.

All five teachers from Riverview mentioned that the school district's adoption of Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (CCSS, NGACBP, 2010) has had a major impact on what is taught for reading and writing. Among other things, the CCSS has led to an increase in the amount of informational text read (up to 50%) and written in the classroom. Second-grade teacher Michelle explained the writing program as "One third is fiction, one third is personal narrative, and one third is non-fiction." The teachers using this curriculum mentioned that they read books multiple times; the initial reading is to build understanding and the second reading is to work on a reading skill. By the third reading, the students' understanding is sufficient such that they can explore content more deeply. Second-grade teacher Jodi shared that this process took some getting used to, as she liked to read a different book each day because "there are so many good books to get to" but now "we're being more intentional in selecting our books, and it's not all the super cutesy, great read-aloud kinds of stories."

Some teachers, such as Beth, Grammy, and Tulip, felt it was their prerogative to select whatever texts they wanted to read and to use them as they felt inspired to, while other teachers felt constrained to stick to books prescribed by curriculum maps and unit guides. Gina, a Kindergarten teacher from Bayside, described how literature may address social studies but it is tied to the literacy curriculum: "I bring it in with literature but

probably it still has to be Houghton Mifflin or the stories from that.” Gina felt that the literature could be used for more, even with her Kindergarten class:

I think my kids are drilled to making predictions and inferences, character setting, problem solving, all those pieces, I mean, we’re pretty well versed. But they want this other information, even Kindergarteners. They’re very interested in maps, umm just different concepts like that. And anything they can relate to in their little world, the bigger world, I think is important.

Greenville second-grade teacher Allison also felt constrained by the culture of her school and the reading curriculum to emphasize literacy even when she wanted to focus on social studies. Allison gave an example about a social studies lesson in which students read a book about a historical figure who wrote a famous letter to the president; to extend the lesson, Allison had her students write letters to the president but she did this to meet the literacy demands of her mentor, who was observing her give the lesson:

That’s what the reading series would have you do. ...I had [my mentor] come watch me do social studies. And we were reading, it’s a great social studies book called *Thank you, Sarah* [Anderson, 2005] and it’s about Sarah Hale and ... the Civil War... it talks about how she helped Thanksgiving to be a national holiday to help bring the country together. Anyways, so we’re going to write letters to Obama. So that was like how I’m tying in writing with this because you’re not supposed to do just social studies is the impression I’m getting. Because then my mentor said, “Make sure you’re incorporating as much literacy and writing as you possibly can.”

Allison went on to further describe how all the activities in her content courses need to not only include a literacy component but that literacy aspects are evaluated with the same or more weight than the content learning:

So if you’re learning about the social studies or science, let’s say we’re doing a science unit on weather and everyone’s going to do a natural disaster, then create a poster. We should be talking to them about bullets and how to put a title. And that’s like, why would that be a science grade? Do you know what I’m saying? If the rubric is, “Do you have a title that’s underlined? Do you have five facts?”

that's not science. If that makes sense. So this is something that I've been struggling with.

**Factor 6.5 – Selection of Literature for Social Studies: Many participants (19 of 27 [70%]) mentioned their efforts to find appropriate literature for teaching social studies.**

Many teachers mentioned a need for good literature in the social studies curriculum, and 19 teachers specifically talked about how they sought ways to bring literature in as much as possible. The self-declared “book hounds” in Riverview (Jodi, Michelle, and Debbie) each emphasized how important it was to use good literature to teach both literacy and content. As Debbie describes, “We teach it more through books, through read alouds. And it might not be taught explicitly, but it's taught embedded in what we're teaching and then we talk about it and then we review it.”

Several teachers talked about finding resources through the school or public library. Both Hillside Academy first-grade teacher Beth and Eastfield Kindergarten teacher Katy mentioned how they use online resources to find literature related to themes. Katy looks for websites that “have a good book list: fiction, nonfiction, and things that they use in their units.” After consulting websites, Katy goes to the school library for resources. Beth orders books online from the public library but this process “is kind of hit-or-miss”: she cannot preview the books online but she likes the convenience as she has little time to spend searching libraries for resources. Clearview first-grade teacher Melody mentioned that she too has little time for finding resources and used to depend on

the school librarian; now, however, the media specialist at her school is more concerned with technology than with finding resources for classroom use.

Lakeview second-grade teacher Anna looks for literature that challenges and inspires students, getting them to think about the different ways that they can make connections from the literature to their own lives. For Anna, most books relate to social studies. She made many connections as she read the three books and described how she would use DiSalvo-Ryan's *Grandpa's Corner Store* (2000) to engage her students:

I think it empowers. It's just an empowering book. And we talk about how our class is always a community and what can you do to help your community? And what can you do to help your family? And whatever. And what would you do right now? And do kids have worthwhile ideas? Do some of your ideas work? Yeah. Do all your ideas work? No.

**Factor 6.6 – Individual Perceptions: Individual perceptions of teaching social studies varied, with some teachers (7 of 27 [26%]) expressing their concern for the lack of social studies; only one teacher ranked social studies as a favorite subject to teach. Fourteen teachers selected reading, four selected language arts, and two selected writing as their favorite subject to teach (20 of 27 [74%]) preferred a language arts subject).**

All teachers mentioned the lack of time to devote to teaching social studies but several expressed their opinion about the quality of the social studies curriculum as well as concerns about the lack of social studies. Talking about her school's social studies curriculum, Bayside first-grade teacher, Ms. B. said, "Our curriculum is not super robust, I should say." Another first-grade teacher, Denise in Lakeview, wondered about the effectiveness of using integration to address time concerns:

That is truly what we try to do to get more bang for our buck as we've had less time and more demands, is to like just integrate as much as we can. So we say, okay, these are our books for read aloud and they're going to serve two purposes. But do they really get enough?

Allison, a second-grade Greenville teacher, declared that "I love social studies. I'm very strict in I think that our kids don't learn it enough and they don't know about government...some of my kids didn't know who the president was." Allison became more animated throughout the interview and, toward the end of our conversation, she articulated more of her frustration with the lack of social studies:

I have tried to like push on the science-social studies because that's, we have so many resources that the school has given us that are not being used. We have tons of science and social studies things that are not being used because people are so obsessed with reading and math, that I mean there's very few people doing any of it. And I say, let's get together and talk about what common assessments we can do, even if we talk about key words or key ideas, let's talk about Martin Luther King, Jr., or we're going to talk about, you know, these agricultural things in this. We should have some basic curriculum that's in common with all the second graders. And people say, well, then (this was at the beginning of last year), "The social studies standards aren't up yet." So because the Common Core social studies standards aren't out yet, we shouldn't teach it? We don't care?

For some teachers, like Allison, social studies is a passion. First-grade Bayview teacher Paige said, "I wish we did more of social studies. I absolutely love it. Social studies is my emphasis actually." Second-grade Ridgeview teacher, Denise, said, "I give social studies a lot more than I give science." Higher View first-grade teacher, Tulip, said that "social studies is in everything almost," and Eastfield second-grade teacher, Grammy, tries to "incorporate it in all the subject areas." Despite these declarations, only one teacher, Clearview Kindergarten teacher Vivian (who did not even have social studies in her daily schedule), rank ordered social studies as the favorite subject to teach

in the pre-interview questionnaire. Social studies was the favorite subject of only two teachers (Vivian and Allison) when they were elementary students.

I did not specifically ask these teachers if they felt comfortable teaching social studies. However, one teacher, Katy who taught Kindergarten in Eastfield, offered that she did not feel as prepared to teach social studies as she was in other subjects:

Social studies is definitely not my strong point when I'm teaching. I feel like when I was growing up we never really had social studies. I mean, I went to a private school so we were doing the basics: reading, math, writing, that's about it.

### **Chapter Summary**

The findings of this chapter address the third research question: What factors do teachers perceive influence their teaching of social studies in the primary grades? The key finding regarding curriculum is that all participating teachers had limited time available for teaching social studies but they would utilize children's literature to teach social studies if their curriculum allowed it. Six factors related to the key finding: (1) limited time available, (2) integrated efforts, (3) curriculum mandates, (4) literacy demands, (5) availability of literature for social studies, and (6) the individual perceptions of teachers regarding social studies.

The findings from the discussion of curriculum highlight the limited time available for teaching social studies in the primary grades, as mentioned by each participant, with an average of nine minutes per day devoted to social studies. Almost one third of the teachers (including eight of the nine Kindergarten teachers) have no time on their schedules specifically for social studies. Social studies curriculum reported by the participants focused on communities, mapping, and wants and needs. Most curriculum

maps were supplied by the school district for the 24 public school teachers with the three private school teachers creating their own social studies curriculum. Some teachers felt constrained by the mandates of the school district to follow literacy curriculum demands more rigidly than state standards for social studies.

The 27 teachers all use literature to address social studies concepts as they come up in reading selections but only 19 (70%) report actually searched for literature for teaching social studies. Seven teachers expressed concern over the lack of social studies and six shared how they try to incorporate more social studies whenever they are able.

## Chapter 7

### Discussion: Appreciation, Connections, and Intentions

In this chapter, I turn attention to discussing the findings of the analytical categories of content, processes, and curriculum. When looking across the responses of the 27 participants, it becomes apparent that there are some common themes of both understanding and appreciation about teaching social studies in the primary grades. These themes confirm some previous research studies and contradict others. Importantly, there are themes that illustrate the relevance of social studies to these primary-grade teachers, the most salient of which is that these teachers were able to focus on social studies in the children's literature that they read and did not only consider literacy concerns, contrary to findings in a previous study (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008). I will first discuss the themes from the findings of each analytical category across the various teachers' responses. I will then attempt to explicate what the three findings may mean collectively and how they might inform practice.

#### Themes Across Content Responses

**Seeing, understanding, and appreciating social studies.** When looking across all 27 cases, it becomes clear that teachers in the primary grades are able to focus on the social studies content in children's literature. This is contrary to some previous research that suggested that even teachers saying they were teaching social studies with children's literature focused more efforts on literacy development (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008; Sunal & Sunal, 2007-8). Leming et al. (2006) reported that half of the elementary teachers observed, integrated social studies with their language arts program but they were using

themes from the literacy program rather than social studies standards. These studies looked at teachers' actual practice; when reading these studies, I came away with the feeling that teachers perhaps were not capable of doing anything different, confirming the studies which contend that elementary teachers are ill-prepared to teach social studies (Bennett, 1993; Farmer, 1983; Skelar, 1998), that they do not like social studies (Passe, 2007; Stodolsky et al., 1991; Zhao & Hoge, 2005), that they are non-committal to social studies (Yeager & Davis, 1995), and that the subject itself is "trite, disjointed, and in need of reform" (Duplass, 2006, p. 137). VanFossen (2005) found that elementary teachers did not teach the minimum social studies curriculum due, in part, to the teachers' lack of understanding of the purpose of elementary social studies.

In this study, however, regardless of the book that was being read or the order in which it was read, the teachers made numerous social studies connections and seemed to have a good grasp on the social studies they would focus on. The catch is that this was a planning exercise, not actual practice. Many participants admitted that if the books were in their reading program, they would feel restricted to talking about literacy because they would have to follow the prescribed reading plans and they could not pay much attention to the social studies ideas that they saw. Much like the teacher in Sunal and Sunal (2007-8), who felt she had to hide supplemental readings that would teach social studies better than the reading series, many teachers in this study felt constrained by the reading program they had to use, which they felt only superficially integrated social studies, and they tried to supplement it. They wanted ways to better teach social studies through literature; while some felt able to do such, others felt that this was discouraged by the

reading series and the school districts' mandates to follow that series. It should be noted that none of the teachers taught in a low-SES school and still felt they needed to focus on literacy development at the expense of content development. The literature holds that this focus is even more pronounced in low-SES schools (von Zastrow & Janc, 2004).

*Seeing social studies.* Across interviews, the teachers made many comments related to the social studies aspects of the three picture books read; overall, half of the comments related to social studies. As described in the study design, I see social studies in just about every book, but I recognize that a teacher's purpose for reading the book may not include social studies. It was important to specify this purpose for teachers within the design of the study and this prompt alone could explain why so many comments were made about social studies. However, I gave this prompt only after the first book was read, and the books were presented to participants in a counterbalanced format (Krathwohl, 1993) to offset this bias. Even with the first book read, before this prompt, there were numerous social studies comments. The participants in this study noted numerous social studies aspects when reading the first book, even before they were prompted to do so. This held true no matter which book was read first. With the first book read, over one third of the comments related to social studies (39%; see Appendix K, Table 4.2). The percentage of social studies comments was highest when *Grandpa's Corner Store* (DiSalvo-Ryan, 2000) was read first (53%); with *Supermarket* (Krull, 2001), 48% of comments related to social studies (see Appendix K, Table 4.9).

Although some have suggested that every book can be a social studies book (e.g., Libresco et al., 2011), the selected texts have been identified as notable social studies

books to ensure that they had social studies content and were examples of quality children's literature. Indeed, these books were purposefully selected *because of* the social studies content; it would have been an absurd task if the books did not relate to social studies in some way. They were also selected because they were connected by a main theme (the cultural universal of food), which could be a social studies idea in the primary grades but may not always be addressed as such or developed as meaningfully as it could be (Brophy & Alleman, 2007). Therefore, it is also possible that the picture books had such obvious social studies content, the teachers could not help but comment on it.

The books selected for this study were intended to be quality literature with subtle, but readily accessible, social studies content that did not scream "this is social studies!" More obvious social studies content might have been found in a book on an historical event or focused on a different country. While *Daisy Comes Home* (Brett, 2002) is set in China and there were many cultural aspects to note in the pictures, the story could have been set in another place. Indeed, some participants did not comment on the setting at all but focused on the social studies aspects of the interactions, values, and personal development of the characters. Others focused on finding cultural similarities and differences. The informational text *Supermarket* (Krull, 2001) was chosen precisely because it did not have photographs, which are often seen by students as a content-specific book; it looked more like a storybook from its cover. Both of these ideas were noted by numerous participants.

In comparison, the teachers observed by Boyle-Baise et al. (2008) were mainly reading selections from the reading series in social studies classes and said they were

using it to teach social studies; in that case, however, even with obvious social studies content, the teachers focused on literacy aspects. In the field experiences of many of the preservice teachers in Sunal and Sunal (2007-8), the in-service teachers used the reading series stories that dealt with social studies topics as social studies or superficially integrated social studies into language arts units.

Interestingly, *Daisy Comes Home* (Brett, 2002), the book with arguably the most obvious social studies content with the setting in China, had the lowest percentage of social studies-related comments when it was read first (20%). This may be explained by the participants' familiarity with the author, Jan Brett, who was often noted as a class favorite and was read with particular interest for the predictive nature of her illustrations, thereby focusing attention on a literacy skill. When read as the second or third book, after prompting to focus on social studies, the percentage of social studies comments was higher (50%) but it was still lower than the other two books, again perhaps attesting to the author familiarity and connections to literacy development. Two second-grade teachers, Laura and Nancy, were the only teachers who used this book in their reading curriculum; both commented on how they had never looked at it as having social studies content before. Both read this as their second book, after being prompted to focus on social studies; 77% of Laura's comments related to social studies but only 28% of Nancy's comments related to social studies; perhaps the familiarity of using this book for literacy development made focusing on the content too difficult. Nancy did focus on social studies more with the other books read (41% with Book B, the first book read, and 70% with Book C). This seems to show that a type of tunnel vision may develop from

encountering a book within the reading curriculum, which may limit the number of ways a text will be utilized by a teacher. This might have happened with the teachers using the reading anthologies to teach social studies in the Boyle-Baise et al. (2008) study.

The ability of the teachers in this study to focus on social studies might be explained by the artificial nature of the interview itself. Teachers were not observed as they were interacting with students. They were asked to explain how they would use the book in their classroom, and this came without any curriculum constraints. It portrays what they *could* plan to do, not what they actually *would* do when interacting with their students. This ideal scenario, where the teacher could promote meaningful social studies, does not consider any constraints of time, student misunderstandings, or classroom distractions much less curriculum demands. Some teachers did note that they might not be able to read some of the books because they were too long for their students' attention span or for the time they had for read alouds. They mentioned where they thought they would have to build background knowledge or where students might not understand the text.

***Understanding social studies.*** The participants did focus on the social studies aspects of the books, showing a depth of understanding of social studies that does not seem to be appreciated by the literature (Bennett, 1993; Olwell & Raphael, 2006). Chi (1997) held that the verbal analysis methods can “capture the representation of the knowledge” a participant has (p. 275). The number of different types of comments related to social studies (note the 41 sub-categories in Appendix N) attests to a depth of understanding about social studies. Teachers did not just say, “I’d use this for teaching

social studies,” but went into detail about how they would use it. For example, Bayside first-grade teacher Ms. B. said her students would like *Daisy Comes Home* (Brett, 2002), because they would connect to their idea of “first-grade justice.” In *Grandpa’s Corner Store* (DiSalvo-Ryan, 2000), Ms. B. noted that the “line at the end is really nice: *The supermarket is big. But it isn’t bigger than a whole neighborhood*” and added that this “is a really neat idea for the kids to think about.” Second-grade Riverview teacher Jodi noted similar sentiments when reading the same book and said that she would

bring up the whole idea of change—is change always good? What’s the value of things staying the same? And what’s good about it, maybe a pros and cons approach to, you know, things seem bigger or having more choices. Is it always a good thing to have more choices like the big stores?

Brophy (1992) noted that elementary teachers well-versed in social studies can teach for understanding. Several studies of teachers focusing on social studies concepts show that primary-grade students can learn social studies and elementary teachers are capable of teaching significant social studies (Macken, 2003; Osborne, 1995; Yessin & Levstik, 1990). All of the participants in my study developed social studies connections with the books read, many of which focused on the “big ideas” of social studies (Alleman, Knighton, & Brophy, 2010). Some of these big ideas can be seen in the 41 sub-categories listing of the content comments (see Appendix L). Teachers wanted their students to have an understanding of how stores work (130 comments), how food is processed and distributed (90 comments), why community is important (56 comments), how maps are helpful (73 comments), and how things change over time (42 comments).

Moreover, teachers wanted students to make connections between social studies ideas and their own lives; connections were mentioned 72 times.

Owens and Nowell (2001) said that literature needs substantial content to teach the big ideas of social studies. The books used in this study had that substantial content (having been identified as “notable” trade books), and the teachers had enough understanding of social studies to identify those big ideas (as evidenced by the variety and volume of comments on significant social studies concepts). It is interesting to note that in the studies conducted by Boyle-Baise et al. (2008) and Sunal & Sunal (2007-8), the teachers used literature from reading anthologies that had some social studies ideas and said that they thought they were teaching social studies with this. However, both the trained observers in Boyle-Baise et al. (2008) and the novice preservice teachers in Sunal and Sunal (2007-8) decided that this practice did not develop meaningful social studies concepts because the teachers focused on literacy development more than social studies. In these cases, perhaps the literature selection was more to blame than the teachers, who were doing what they normally do with the reading series—following the suggestions in the teacher’s edition of the reading program and focusing on literacy development.

*Appreciating social studies.* It is important to highlight the value that participants placed on the social studies content of the three picture books. The sheer number of overall comments during the think-aloud task that related to social studies (1,217 of 2,436 [50%]; see Table 4.5 in Appendix K) can attest to how much the participants value this content area; Chi (1997) says that what participants “choose to talk about is an indication of what they think is important” (p. 293). Teachers commented on the authentic nature of

the texts from the realistic illustrations to the connections they believed their students would make with each book. Brophy and Alleman (2007) held that teachers need to use authentic literature to develop meaningful social studies; many participants indicated they valued books that did this and sought out good literature to help students make connections to their own lives and to build understanding with purposeful learning.

Second-grade Lakeview teacher Anna noted how integral book selection is to her teaching:

I think I probably do have about 700 books in my room and I don't even know what I all have. And so every moment, our days are so packed, that every moment that we are doing something, it's pretty darn close to intentional learning. So I'm thinking, "What is the purpose of me reading this?"

Teachers also appreciated how the illustrations helped develop meaning and understanding of the texts. Many commented on how they felt their students would respond to the pictures and how they would gain understanding from both the pictures and the text. This idea was highlighted in Sipe's studies of primary students responding to storybooks (2000, 2008). Research supports the use of picture books to foster understanding in social studies because of the multiple meanings that picture books can promote (Farris & Fuhler, 1994). In this study, Northview teacher Dan noted that his Kindergarten students would likely come away with different meanings for the same book read; for example, in *Supermarket* (Krull, 2001), some students would focus on the food displays while others would be thinking more about the prices noted in the illustrations or the jobs that people were doing; all are aspects of social studies but bring different meaning from the same text. As he further explained:

There'd be a wide range of thinking for them for where you hear their conversation and thoughts. And obviously I think what would happen too is it is differentiated enough to where your higher-level thinking also would really come in, so you can really expand on that. [Book C, read first]

Research has shown that picture books can be used to learn about the past (Chick, 2006; Harms & Lettow, 1993, 1994). Many of the participants commented that their students would be interested in the pictures in *Supermarket* (Krull, 2001) that depict changes over time in our food distribution processes; some said they would skim the text that describes this change and allow the pictures “to speak for themselves.”

Several participants would take a critical perspective as they read the books with their students. Two second-grade teachers, Allison from Greenville and Nancy from Ridgeview, would want their students to take a critical stance as they read *Supermarket* (Krull, 2001), because they thought it promoted commercialism. Lakeview teacher Anna, also teaching second grade, would engage students in discussion about how shopping choices can affect a community. These examples coincide with research that finds picture books can foster social consciousness (Owens & Nowell, 2001).

### **Themes Across Process Responses**

**Multiple purposes, making connections, and constructing meaning.** As the teachers read the three books, they described multiple purposes for reading them to their students. Most participants agreed that the three books would be appropriate for their grade level and that they could use each book as a read aloud in their classroom. Three core planning processes were utilized by the teachers: (1) determining appropriate

reading strategies they would focus on, (2) making connections between the books to the content curriculum, and (3) planning how to help students construct meaning.

***Multiple purposes.*** Teachers in this study were open to multiple ways of looking at texts and multiple purposes for reading texts. They purposefully planned to connect both language arts and social studies activities in all three books read. Pressley (2005) describes how the best first-grade teachers in a previous study always connected activities with one another so that “literacy instruction tied in with content instruction” (p. 251).

The teachers were familiar with the reading and thinking strategies that support literacy development, as evidenced by the numerous comments made regarding such. The training of elementary teachers places an emphasis on the language arts and many participants referenced, as first-grade teacher Beth did, that literacy development was “our primary academic work.”

The teachers planned to use a variety of processes to purposefully address literacy needs, develop literary appreciation, and foster content understanding. The content development was not left to chance as had been found in Boyle-Baise et al. (2008). Teachers in this study read the texts carefully and detailed multiple and creative ways of using the books to develop language arts and social studies. Second-grade Ridgeview teacher Michelle discussed how *Daisy Comes Home* (Brett, 2002) would fit into both literacy and social studies:

This might be a great book to actually do during reading workshop and then to bring it in to social studies with community and then maybe do some sort of Venn diagram of comparing and contrasting the different communities. How we live compared to how Mei Mei...how she lives and the way, and differences. [Book A]

Elementary teachers must consider how to get more out of each learning experience in their classrooms. Limiting the use of a book to only one purpose, such as saying that it be used to teach social studies in this way without a focus on literacy development, is contrary to how elementary teachers think about the time and resources they have available. Even in her explanation of how she uses time throughout the day for multiple purposes, second-grade teacher Grammy bounced back and forth between literacy and social studies:

We're reading for main idea, details. We are doing compare and contrast. Umm like comparing one culture with another one. Umm, just even reading fluency. Kids have, umm, one of the time periods where they are at literacy centers, that's read to someone, and I have the whole class do it at one time every day. We have our morning meeting and then I have them do the read to someone. And a lot of times it's from the social studies book or it might be from Time for Kids...I have some of the books for guided reading that are also social studies-oriented. So it gets, there really aren't enough minutes in the day to teach everything we're supposed to teach so if you didn't, umm, use other subject time, we wouldn't get the other concepts in.

Researchers focused on the use of literature to teach social studies need to consider how ingrained it is for elementary teachers to use texts for multiple purposes. This is not an either-or proposition: Teachers aim to address both literacy demands and content needs.

***Making connections.*** The teachers in this study were mindful that comprehension is key to understanding the content, and the connections are important for comprehension (McGowan & Guzzetti, 1991; Santoro et al., 2008). They see that literacy is a tool for learning content (Williams et al., 2007) and that connections to their own lives help to develop comprehension, as discussed by Ridgeview second-grade teacher Michelle:

They definitely can make some connections here when they go to the store, about when it said *Shoppers with children spend more time and money*. We could talk about why that is and you know, the whole idea of why they always ask for things, making some connections there. [Book C]

Michelle also stressed making content connections with the community actions depicted in *Grandpa's Corner Store* (DiSalvo-Ryan, 2000):

And this here, this is what I'm thinking: It's just interesting how people can become divided about a particular topic. And it was evident in our classroom when we were voting on whether or not the community should have a toy store, an animal shelter, or a skate park. Kids took it very personally and they were very, "No, it has to have this!" They became very, they had their opinions and just how, if we had done that already, where you could pull that connection in here, and how the key to what a teacher is saying, how a community is really about people who live and work together. [Book B]

Bayside Kindergarten teacher Gina, who did not have specific time in her schedule for social studies, immediately made social studies connections, even with the first book read (before being cued to focus on social studies):

Well, I guess depending on what my focus is, I mean just even reading on this first page...it's more like taking a social studies route. It's certainly making connections to a time when you had something that was there for a long time then went away. [Book B]

Southside Kindergarten teacher Linda described how she helps her students make connections across texts and to their own lives as she was reading *Daisy Comes Home* (Brett, 2002):

We'd talk, if I had read something like this previously [*Supermarket*, Krull, 2001] and I had read something like this, we could talk about the differences of a supermarket to another market; one market to another market because this is an outdoor market. And somebody might say, "This kind of looks like a farmer's market" that they've been to. So they might have a connection there. [Book A]

The participants recognized that literature can be used to develop higher-level thinking (Neumann, 2009). Second-grade Ridgeview teacher Jodi pointed out several instances where the texts supported higher-level thinking including *Supermarket* (DiSalvo-Ryan, 2000): “This would be probably a higher level thinking, you know, where do they get their facts about shoppers’ preferences and, you know, even looking at, kind of, that marketing aspect of the whole thing.”

The participant teachers also were confident that their students can learn social studies from children’s literature (Beck & McKeown, 1991; Guzzetti et al., 1992; Levstik, 1986; Villano, 2005). Bayside first-grade teacher Ms. B. explained that she depends on literature to bring out social studies ideas because:

Our curriculum is not super...robust, I should say. So we supplement a lot and in fact, the Native American thing is completely stuff we’ve found umm on different blog sites and things. So we spend time reading nonfiction books about the first Thanksgiving but also reading fiction books with characters set in that time. And then umm the kids do a lot of writing about it, responses to fiction and nonfiction.

***Constructing meaning.*** The participant teachers purposefully planned how to help students construct meaning by determining the questions or discussion points based on their understanding of their students’ prior knowledge, possible connections they would make, as well as their likely responses to the text, illustrations, and genre of the books. As Southside Kindergarten teacher Linda pointed out, “We just don’t read a story. There’s always comments and talking and discussion.” Linda makes use of illustrations to have her students read the text at a deeper level. When reading *Grandpa’s Corner Store* (DiSalvo-Ryan, 2000), Linda said she would ask: “And why does the grandpa look sad? And [the girl] tries not to cry when she hugs her grandpa and she gives him the

grocery store she colored for the school map ‘cause the map won’t need it now.’”

Teachers made discussion points (263 references) and specific questions (116), indicating a high level of planning to foster and check for understanding, two critical literacy skills that have obvious carryover into social studies learning.

Many of the teachers anticipated how their students would respond at different points in the books, indicating the presence of reader response ideas (Galda & Liang, 2003; Rosenblatt, 1994; 1995). Bayside first-grade teacher Ms. B. pointed out several places where her first graders “would love this part.” Also referring to *Daisy Comes Home* (Brett, 2002), Greenville teacher Allison said that her second-graders would also be passionate about parts of the same text: “My kids love it. They love the illustrations. I had a lot of artistic kids last year that were super-interested and they tried to make their own books.” Lakeview teacher Kelly said that her first graders would enjoy the informational text in *Supermarket* (Krull, 2001): “First graders love facts – the fact of the day – so they would love this.”

Many teachers talked about the text-to-self connections their students would make. Reading *Daisy Comes Home* (Brett, 2002), Ms. B. recounted that her first graders

have worked on using schema to make text-to-self connections. So this part was just making me think, when she was kind of floating down the river, that it might be a good time to ask if the kids have any connections. Could they think of a time they were kind of scared like Daisy? [Book A]

With the other two books, her students would also make connections between the two: “If we had read both of these books, I would probably encourage the kids to make a text-to-text connection about the smaller grocery stores turning into bigger grocery stores”

[comparing Book B and Book C]. The authentic nature of the three books enabled many such connections, something that Brophy and Alleman, (2007) say is essential for building meaningful social studies. Sipe (2000, 2008) found that students make analytical, intertextual, and personal connections with picture books, all of which the teachers in this study anticipated. These teachers recognized the value in promoting connections and they know that their students like to make them.

Focusing on making meaning from pictures was a prevalent focus of the participants, being noted 58 times from 21 participants. With each of the books, participants commented on the quality of the images; many teachers also mentioned that the illustrations would engage their students. Southside teacher Linda declared that her Kindergarteners would be “scooting up” to see the pictures better. At least nine teachers would do picture walks in anticipation of reading the book. Teachers know that pictures help develop content understanding (Chick, 2006; Farris & Fuhler, 1994; Harms & Lettow, 1993, 1994) and recognize the importance of images in literacy development (Sipe, 2000, 2008). Teachers planned to use pictures to compare and contrast to what their students know as Marshall (1999) did. They know that images are integral to the meaning and messages of the picture books (Macken, 2003; Sipe, 2000, 2008).

Some teachers were concerned about how their students would handle *Supermarket* (Krull, 2001), because it had “too many facts.” Ridgeview second-grade teacher Debbie and Eastfield Kindergarten teacher Katy said the book would not be a good read-aloud because it had too much information. Katy might read it aloud if she could “pick out the important pieces because it gets too long to read all of the little

pieces.” Debbie would tell her students that they “might not always read everything because a lot of that is just factual information that’s supporting your reading in a nonfiction book.” Such concerns may limit the use of nonfiction and informational texts but research supports the use of informational text even with primary students (Duke, 2000a, 2000b; Levstik & Yessin, 1990; Yopp & Yopp, 2006).

The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (NGACBP, 2010) have been adopted in both the states where this study was conducted. Several teachers, such as all five of those in the Riverview school district, mentioned that this was compelling them to focus their reading selections so that half of their books were informational texts or nonfiction; they all thought that this was a good thing for their students and embraced these changes. These teachers mentioned professional development time that helped them to understand how to utilize the Common Core in their classroom instruction; the teachers in the other state, which also had recently adopted the Common Core, did not mention this at all.

Nevertheless, fiction dominates the classroom libraries of the participants as reported on the completed questionnaire. Several teachers mentioned the need for good informational texts for the primary level, particularly for teaching social studies. Biographies were the predominant nonfiction choice for social studies; several teachers noted that they have many more informational texts for science than for social studies. Biographies often limit selection to “heroes” and “famous Americans,” both noted by the teachers in Riverview and Greenville as a main focus of their social studies curriculum,

but there are alternative biographies which focus on less familiar figures (Meyers, Holbrook, & May, 2009; Zarnowski, 2004, 2009).

Some teachers were concerned that the content went “over the heads” of their students; James (2008) found that elementary teachers are particularly protective of their students learning about mature themes. In *Grandpa’s Corner Store* (DiSalvo-Ryan, 2000), the sub-text about big stores displacing smaller stores was mentioned by at least three teachers as possibly not appropriate to discuss in their class. Other teachers relished the notion of bringing up such challenging discussion and thought this would be a means of differentiating instruction; Northview teacher Dan, in particular, thought that the higher-level thinkers in his Kindergarten class would latch onto such ideas. Many of the teachers wanted to promote empathy their students’ empathy with the literature, a finding supported by other studies (Brooks, 2009; Brophy, 1992).

### **Themes Across Curriculum Responses**

**Time crunches, purposeful integration, and curriculum constraints.** For these participants, the major influences on the teaching of social studies in the primary grades were: (1) time available, (2) integration opportunities, and (3) curriculum constraints. All 27 participants reported that they do not have enough time for all the things they need to do in their day and have limited time for social studies. Because of this time crunch, they recognize the need to integrate social studies through the literature they read to their students. This is seen as a means of efficiency. Reading curriculum constraints, both real and perceived, focus attention on using literature selections for literacy development.

***Time crunches.*** All participants noted that they did not have enough time to devote to teaching social studies; the average amount of time per week was nine minutes for these teachers (see Appendix P). Eight Kindergarten teachers did not even have time in their schedule for social studies; they incorporated social studies through the literature they read and activities or art projects (such as creating construction paper Liberty Bells and eagles to promote understanding of national symbols). This time crunch is a long-standing issue as confirmed by veteran teachers interviewed (Tulip, Grammy, Dan, and Anna) and by the literature (Haas & Laughlin, 2001; Houser, 1995; Parker, 2009). Several researchers have stated that students from lower socio-economic status have less social studies instruction (von Zastrow & Janc, 2004); the present study was conducted in communities of middle- to high-SES and there still was very limited time for social studies. Some teachers, particularly new teachers such as Allison and Katy, mentioned that the emphasis on reading and math takes away from time for social studies or science, but most other teachers considered this as the acceptable way of teaching in the primary grades. As first-grade teacher Beth said, reading and math “are our primary academic work.” Much literature in the past ten years has linked accountability measures to the time limits for teaching social studies (Bailey et al., 2006; Boyle-Baise et al., 2008; Duplass, 2007; Fitchett & Heafner, 2010; Lintner, 2006; O’Connor et al., 2007; Pascopella, 2006; Sunal & Sunal, 2007-8; VanFossen, 2005).

***Purposeful integration.*** Osborne (1995) used historical fiction and nonfiction to teach both literacy and social studies. This whole language approach focused on interactive reading of texts purposefully incorporated social studies. In this study, the

participants commented on each book in a way that addressed both the language arts and the social studies. They said they use this strategy for greater efficiency and the same has been found in other cases (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008; Hinde, 2005, 2009; Kent & Simpson, 2008; Sunal & Sunal, 2007-8). Some teachers in this study, such as Tulip and Grammy, saw social studies in “just about everything” as promoted by Libresco et al. (2011). Interestingly, these both were veteran teachers (each with 37 years of experience) who seemed to be able to work social studies in throughout the day. In keeping with previous research (Haas & Laughlin, 2001; Holloway & Chiodo, 2009; Hutton & Burstein, 2008), many teachers noted that they find multiple ways to include social studies in the school day from read alouds, activities, other content, and writing.

Some participants are teaching social studies but not labeling it as such. Eastfield Kindergarten teacher Katy said that she focuses on character development in her class but that this was “not social studies.” Integration seemed like a way to “sneak” social studies into the curriculum for Denise, a first-grade teacher, who had explained that her mapping unit was done in math class but said “It doesn’t matter, right? Just that you do it, not what you call it” [Book B].

Second-grade Riverview teacher Jodi described how integration is a subject of debate in her school:

We’ve had some interesting conversations about this because there’s a desire to make things more integrated because we just need to cover more. It’s this time crunch. So we need to use this and get all of these things out of it. And one of the things we struggled with, with the literacy part, is you are explicitly teaching ways to think about a book, umm strategies that readers use and all of those things. And so you can’t do all of those things and explicitly teach social studies content.

Greenville second-grade teacher Allison also wondered about how much is being taught through integration by teachers in her school. She sees that many teachers are neglecting the content areas and complained that “We have tons of science and social studies things that are not being used because people are so obsessed with reading and math, that I mean there’s very few people doing any of it.” She indicated that if it’s “a priority, you make time for it.” Brophy and Alleman (1991, 2007) have expressed repeated concerns throughout the past two decades about how little social studies is done through integration. This was surely borne out in the studies conducted by Boyle-Baise et al. (2008) and Sunal and Sunal (2007-8).

***Curriculum constraints.*** The curriculum maps that many participants referenced were done through the local school district or by the teachers themselves in the private schools. These curriculum maps covered a limited number of topics, as outlined in Appendix Q. For example, in Lakeview first-grade classrooms, the focus was on families, mapping, and Mexico. This school and others visited for this study appeared to have similar curriculum aspects covered in different grade levels, a common practice in elementary social studies (Barton, 2009). Several teachers mentioned that they would want to bring the economic concepts detailed in the three books into their classroom but that they were not covered by their curriculum maps, so they felt they could not do so. Although they were aware that there were state standards in social studies, most seemed unaware that these state standards directly covered these economic concepts.

The curriculum maps for social studies were created locally but the reading curriculums, on the other hand, are commercially available, nationally recognized

programs. These appear to play a much larger role in what is taught in the classroom. Several teachers, such as second-grade Greenville teacher Allison, Riverview second-grade teacher Jodi, and Clearview Kindergarten teacher Vivian, mentioned that they would not be able to focus on using selections within the reading curriculum to teach social studies because they had to follow the curriculum maps, which focused on literacy. As noted by Allison, “You don’t talk about the social studies part.”

A cursory review of several reading series confirms that there are limited social studies ideas addressed in the teacher’s editions, even when there are social studies themes in the reading selection. Granted, the reading curriculum is supposed to focus on language arts, not content. However, the publishers do promote that their series address content needs as well as literacy; teachers, as seen in this study and others (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008; Sunal & Sunal, 2007-8), think that the reading selections are geared to supporting their content instruction. A thorough review of these reading series is beyond the scope of this study, but it is important to take note of teachers’ perceptions of the constraints imposed by the reading curriculum. Because of these perceptions or beliefs, even if the literature had apparent social studies themes or big ideas, some teachers said they would not teach about them in any significant way if they were not addressed in the commercial curriculum they had to follow. Again, this may explain why the teachers in the Boyle-Baise et al. (2008) and Sunal and Sunal (2007-8) studies were not using the social studies selections in their reading anthology to “teach” social studies but were instead focusing on literacy development; perhaps they were just following the prescribed protocols.

The idea of teachers just following the prescribed curriculum flies in the face of the gatekeeper image of the teacher (Thornton, 2005). An exception to this appears to be the veteran teachers who seem to know how to maneuver around such constraints and work in social studies throughout their day. They see social studies in many different things and do not consider it something that must be confined to the scheduled time.

The teachers in this study did appear to appreciate curriculum that is planned out for them. They cited the lack of time for planning and access to resources, such as good informational texts for social studies in the primary grades, as constraints. Several teachers mentioned looking for resources online and following suggestions for theme-based literature, if they could find it in their local library. Lakeview teachers liked that their locally-created social studies curriculum included lesson plans with discussion points and activities; the books that were cited in the curriculum were provided to the teachers.

### **Themes Across Analytical Categories**

Two major themes emerged across the three analytical categories of content, process, and curriculum: getting “more bang for the buck” and valuing social studies. These relate to the efficiency of integration and to the widely held value that the participants had for social studies, despite the looming demands of their literacy programs.

**Getting “more bang for the buck.”** Whether thinking aloud about the three picture books or discussing curriculum, the participants were keenly aware of how little time they would have to actually read one of these notable books in their classroom. Most

teachers proposed that they would be able to integrate it into their curriculum through the read alouds they select. Sometimes they must use the read alouds provided with their reading curriculum, but some do try to bring in content-specific read alouds to get social studies and science into the curriculum more; both subjects were difficult for these teachers to fit into their schedules. Everything they did was purposeful and intentionally designed to serve multiple purposes. Denise, a Lakeview first-grade teacher, described integration efforts but she also questioned if these efforts taught content well enough:

That is truly what we try to do to get more bang for our buck as we've had less time and more demands, is to like just integrate as much as we can. So we say, okay, these are our books for read aloud and they're going to serve two purposes. But do they really get enough?

Using literature to teach social studies may address skills important for literacy and for social studies (Levstik, 1986; Kent & Simpson, 2008; Roser & Keehn, 2002). Finding the main idea and supporting details are literacy skills but they can be social studies skills as students read for big ideas and look for evidence to back up their arguments. Students learn to look for similarities and differences between different categories as they compare and contrast details in the text, which is both a literacy and a social studies skill. Understanding graphic material is an important literacy aim which lends itself to social studies skills, such as being able to recognize perspective in visual images such as photographs, maps, graphs, and political cartoons. Reading instruction that has students visualize may be germane to thinking about other perspectives and capitalizing on affective values, benefiting literacy and social studies. Being able to make connections in reading to oneself, other texts, and the world is an important literary and

social studies experience. Literacy skills support students' thinking skills and critical thinking through development of understanding, knowledge of processes, and affective growth (Duplass, 2007). Literacy skills, such as reading for literal and inferential meaning, detecting cause and effect relationships, distinguishing between fact and opinion, and using literature to enrich meaning, are essential for social studies (NCSS, 1994).

**Valuing social studies.** During the interviews, I was encouraged that participants could zero in on the social studies content, sometimes even finding ideas that I had not considered myself, and that many had a keen sense of the importance of keeping social studies in their curriculum. It was impressive to me that so many teachers could focus on aspects of social studies that were not in their curriculum maps, such as the economic concepts in all three books, and the personal development ideas, represented in two of the books. I was also continually amazed at how many different things the teachers brought up within the interviews. While there were some similarities, the emphasis was as varied as the teachers themselves. Perhaps this emerged because 14 different schools (across two states) were represented in the study. Regardless of these differences, there was a sense from every teacher that they were excited to be teaching, that they knew a great deal about how to promote literacy, and that they wished they had more time and resources to teach social studies.

### **Chapter Summary**

A better understanding of the perceptions of elementary teachers regarding the teaching of social studies may provide insights that would support future curriculum

development and help meet the challenges of keeping the subject, which has the important purpose of developing civic competence, in the elementary curriculum. The overriding finding of this study revealed that teachers in the primary grades were able to focus on social studies content encountered in the three picture books but felt limited in teaching social studies by both time and curriculum constraints. The findings detailed in the previous three chapters addressed the three research questions related to the three analytical categories of content, processes, and curriculum. In this chapter, I analyzed, interpreted, and synthesized the findings, organized by those same analytical categories. The final chapter deals with conclusions and recommendations related the findings.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Children's literature has long been used to teach social studies (Krey, 1998; Libresco et al., 2011), and even young students have been able to develop social studies understandings from reading a variety of literature, including fiction, nonfiction, and informational text (Levstik & Yessin, 1990; Macken, 2003; Osborne, 1995; Williams et al., 2007). In the age of accountability measures, using social studies literature within literacy instructional time has been seen as a way to meet literacy demands and keep social studies in the elementary curriculum (Hinde, 2005, 2008; Kent & Simpson, 2008). However, doing this well can be a difficult task that neglects the development of meaningful social studies content (Brophy & Alleman, 1991, 2007; McGuire, 2007). Research has found that teachers focus more on literacy when using literature to teach social studies in the elementary grades (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008). Why does this happen and what can be done to address the issue? Is it because elementary teachers do not know enough or care enough about social studies? Is it because they are better able to address literacy or because they are too focused on meeting demands of reading and math? Is it due to a lack of resources or a lack of time? Do the standards not address meaningful social studies? This study only addresses these questions in the context of the responses of 27 primary-grade teachers. I believe, however, that the findings discussed here – addressing content, processes, and curriculum – are relevant to the current field of elementary social studies education. Although they stem from the thoughts of the participants of this study, they are applicable to other elementary teachers faced with

similar concerns of what and how to teach their children, to curriculum developers in school districts and publishing houses who plan what to teach in the elementary grades, and to teacher educators who wrestle with the ways to adequately prepare future teachers.

My study explored how primary-grade teachers may utilize children's literature to teach social studies. Before beginning the study, I assumed that teachers would be focusing on literacy, because that is what the research indicates (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008). I found that these participants actually focused as much or more on the social studies aspects of each book than with how they could use the book for literacy development. Even before cued to discuss social studies, the participants focused over one third of their comments on social studies (39%) compared to literacy (32%) and reader response (19%). This shows that they naturally picked up on the social studies content but, as elementary teachers often do, they used children's literature to address multiple purposes.

### **Content: Interest In and Preparation For Teaching Social Studies**

Teachers focused on the social studies ideas of each of the three picture books. I had anticipated that teachers would not be that interested in social studies because the literature has shown that this is the least-liked subject of elementary teachers (Stodolsky et al., 1991; Zhao & Hoge, 2005). Some researchers have further pointed out that most elementary teachers are not well prepared to teach social studies (Bennett, 1993; Brophy & Alleman, 2009; Olwell & Raphael, 2006). My own cursory review of teacher preparation program requirements attests to the limited amount of social studies content required of elementary teachers (see Appendix A). Instead, I found that, while only one

participant ranked social studies as her favorite subject to teach, each teacher articulated how the books could fit into their social studies curriculum and how they would use the books to help students make meaningful social studies connections. For example, despite the lack of background in economics, a majority of teachers were able to address the elementary economic themes in each of the three picture books. Many of the teachers addressed basic ideas, such as wants and needs, but some teachers looked at the texts critically and wanted to have their K-2 students focus on marketing mechanisms and how they are being targeted as consumers.

Overall, content knowledge was apparent and wide-ranging as seen in the large number of participants' comments relating to social studies (1,217 out of 2,436) across 42 sub-categories (see Appendices K and L). As a teacher educator, however, I would be remiss to say that teachers are getting enough social studies in their preparation, and I did note some misconceptions among the teachers (not discussed here as this project and process was not designed as an evaluation of their social studies knowledge). As with the teachers interviewed in this study, most elementary teachers experience limited social studies instruction from their own time in elementary school through their undergraduate college courses (Stack & Burke, 2010). These teachers are products of the U.S. school system where there is little social studies, and they may well be perpetuators of the same.

The exceptions appear to be teachers with a lot of experience teaching (and, perhaps, a better background in the social studies themselves) who have figured ways to include social studies throughout the day, and the younger (perhaps idealistic) teachers who are frustrated that they cannot teach more social studies. There appears to be some

correlation between this viewpoint and higher levels of advocacy for teaching social studies. While teachers do not seem to need to like social studies in order to teach it, as seen with the number of social studies comments made on each book, it does seem that a background in social studies promotes confidence in teaching the subject and advocacy for incorporating it within the school day. With limited backgrounds in social studies, teachers are happy to teach what they are told to teach (particularly when provided with all the resources they need), but they are not pushing to do more if they do not have to. One way to get more social studies exposure would be to incorporate more content courses into elementary teacher preparation programs either as core content courses or through more robust elementary social studies methods courses.

At the very least, efforts should be made to help teachers to understand the broad range of topics which encompass the social studies, as there seems to be a limited view of what social studies is. One Kindergarten teacher indicated that character development was not social studies; while some would agree with this assessment and say that social studies should be built around big ideas (Alleman, Knighton & Brophy, 2010), many scholars advocate that character development instilling respect and responsibility are social studies concepts which are taught throughout the day (Holloway & Chiodo, 2009). Another teacher said that they did “not do economics in first grade” but proceeded to speak at length about the economics concepts in the books (such as jobs, stores, wants and needs), and continued by indicating that they do discuss such ideas frequently in her class, particularly during read alouds. Those who articulated a definition of social studies seemed focused on history and geography with some talking about communities. Many

of the teachers picked up on the themes of bullying and helping others in two of the books, although two teachers said bullying discussions were not part of social studies but part of a school-wide program. This may show that teachers only think of content taught during social studies time as teaching social studies; veteran teachers, such as Tulip, Grammy, and Dan, linked social studies to things they taught throughout the day, integrated across the curriculum.

Some teachers linked ideas of building community in their classroom, which they considered to be teaching social studies (which it is) even though it was not a concept outlined in their social studies curriculum maps. Others said that these ideas were linked to their studies of community in social studies where they emphasized jobs, community helpers, and places in the community. The concept of building community relates to the main purpose of social studies, which is “to promote civic competence” (NCSS, 1994, p. 3), but only Greenville second-grade teacher Allison, just two years from her teacher education program, outlined a vision of social studies that aligned with the NCSS purpose statement when she said:

A huge responsibility of teachers is to prepare students to be citizens and to be able to be successful in the real world.... People have lost sight of creating good citizens that know and have the knowledge and have the resources that they need, the background.

The main finding relating to content was that these teachers in the primary grades were focused on social studies as much as literacy as they read these three picture books. Using content to develop literacy provides something meaningful to read and learn about. Promoting literacy in the content areas is important, but content can be developed

through literacy instruction as well (Howe, 1995; Levstik, 1986; Smith et al., 1992; Williams et al., 2007).

From my study, I conclude that liking the subject does not seem to influence whether or not the teacher will teach social studies. As noted, only one teacher declared that social studies was her favorite subject to teach, and most of the teachers (20 of 27 [74%]) actually listed some form of language arts as such (14 listed reading as their favorite, 4 listed language arts and 2 listed writing). While the time available to teach social studies does impact how much social studies is taught, the participants in this study were willing to incorporate social studies teaching throughout the day, particularly with appropriate literature. As previously noted, researchers have found that social studies is one of the least-liked subjects (Stodolsky et al., 1991; Zhao & Hoge, 2005), but this may have more to do with not having time or resources for teaching social studies. Other studies have found that teachers are making time (Kent & Simpson, 2008), because they recognize the value of the subject – even to the extent of conducting social studies “behind closed doors” (Hutton & Burstein, 2008, p. 96). This is better than leaving it “on the back burner” (Houser, 1995, p. 147) but it may not be enough.

### **Processes: Utilizing Children’s Literature for Multiple Purposes**

The main finding relating to processes is that teachers in the primary grades look for ways to use texts for multiple purposes. The participants are well-versed in literacy practices. Many mentioned that they look for children’s literature to meet literacy needs and to teach content. One school district, Lakeview, provided trade books with the social studies curriculum, and the teachers there incorporated and depended on these texts for

teaching social studies. The Lakeview teachers all said that this curriculum was helpful, because they did not have to search for the books themselves. Teachers in the Riverview school district said they search out texts for teaching content; however, they were doing so to find informational texts in order to meet the recently-adopted Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (NGACBP, 2010), which promotes reading informational texts at least 50% of the time.

The participants in this study used many of the recommended processes for evaluating text outlined by Brophy and Alleman (2007), as seen by the number of planning processes they employed as they read the three books. I created an ABC mnemonic (Authenticate, Building, Connecting, Determine, and Evaluate) based on the Brophy and Alleman recommendations in order to categorize and count the number of the processes mentioned. Two types of processes, Authenticate and Evaluate, were noted the least frequently. Both are important for addressing social studies purposes, as they are based on whether or not the text is authentic and would be useful for teaching meaningful social studies. Emphasizing these within the planning process would help to provide teachers with a way to evaluate children's literature to meet social studies goals as well as literacy demands.

Teachers appreciate resources that help them do their job better and faster. However, none of the participants knew about the NCSS or its resources, such as the Notable books list or the practitioner journals that are available to help them be better informed teachers of social studies. Apparently, the NCSS has missed a portion of its intended audience; I think the NCSS must reach out more to elementary teachers to

promote their resources and make practitioner articles available online without membership, at least for a trial period; the membership ranks might even grow from such efforts. Teacher education students and new teachers currently get discounted memberships, but a free trial period would be even better. The articles in *Social Studies and the Young Learner* also need to be available on online library databases; current practice lists the articles, but access is only for NCSS members.

Helping teachers to learn about resources, including children's literature, appears to be a NCSS priority as seen by the annual publication of the Notable Social Studies Tradebooks for Young People list. This is available to the general public. However, the functionality of this publication is limited. Given current technology, there also should be a searchable database of the Notable books. It should include lists from the past decades; while the lists from the past twelve years are available online, it is not searchable. A database that could be sorted by topic, grade level, and genre, as well as author, title, and year, would help teachers find resources. Quality materials do not go out of style, and school libraries may already have many of the books on their shelves, but do not have them labeled as being singled out as a "notable" social studies text. This would help teachers to find literature that meets standards of excellence. At the college where I teach, the librarian recently went through the stacks of children's books and put identification labels on books noted for a variety of attributes, including award winners from various organizations as well as those on the Notable list. New books were also ordered based on the Notable list to keep the collection up to date with quality materials.

### **Curriculum Findings: The Teacher as Gatekeeper?**

The gatekeeper image suggests that the teacher is in control over what happens in his or her classroom (Thornton, 2005). Ultimately, this is true as the teacher enacts the curriculum, and everything goes through the teacher. By this, it is inferred that the teacher can use good judgment and can make decisions about the curriculum that are right for the students. The teacher decides what methods to use and how to manage time (within the schedule set by the school) and the curriculum. However, many of the teachers in this study, arguably similar to elementary teachers in many places, felt that they had strict boundaries about what they could or could not do in their classroom, particularly for the reading curriculum. The school district administrators and curriculum developers who select the curriculum materials, mandate time spent on different subjects, and create curriculum maps for teachers to follow, may be the real gatekeepers.

**Curriculum demands.** The key finding regarding curriculum is that all participating teachers felt they had limited time available for teaching social studies but would utilize children's literature to teach social studies if they thought their curriculum allowed it. Teachers have long known that literature can develop content understanding; if they are not constrained to focus only on literacy, teacher will work to develop both. The veteran teachers in this study find ways to incorporate social studies ideas throughout the day; they also have a perspective of social studies that expands beyond the state standards or their school's curriculum maps.

Many of the participating teachers indicated that they would not be able to use the books for teaching social studies during literacy time, because they need to follow the

reading curriculum prescribed by their school district. Greenville second-grade teacher Allison was particularly disturbed by curriculum demands and declared that the focus on reading and math had “invaded” her time to teach social studies and science; she felt compelled to focus on literacy skills even when she had time to teach these other subjects. Several commented on how the school district curriculum required a strict adherence to literacy development, because the literature was used in the literacy block, even when the book was related to social studies. In keeping with Boyle-Baise et al. (2008) these teachers felt they could focus only on literacy if they were reading the books as part of the reading curriculum, but contrary to the Boyle-Baise teachers, if the books were part of their social studies time, they would then concentrate on social studies. Riverview second-grade teacher Jodi said she could read the book and look at comprehension strategies during reading time and then could use the same book more productively during social studies to concentrate on content with a second reading. The Boyle-Baise et al. (2008) study, however, looked at teachers who were using the reading anthology *during social studies time* so that finding was a compelling argument that teachers felt constrained by literacy demands to use content time to teach literacy, as Allison did. The teachers in Boyle-Baise et al. were tangentially teaching social studies only as they needed to build background knowledge in order to make sense of the literature. Most of the teachers in this study said they would use the books during social studies to focus on social studies, but they also emphasized literacy elements such as comprehension strategies as needed to understand the reading. The teachers often use literature to address literacy demands and content understanding in order to get “more

bang for the buck,” but many in this study felt that they were not free to do this when the reading curriculum dictated that they only focus on literacy development.

Given the many different types of comments that were engendered during the think alouds, it seems reasonable to conclude that if the teachers in this study had the time to teach social studies, they could use children’s literature effectively to do so. Many of the teachers’ comments went into depth about social studies, some even taking a critical stance about topics the books addressed. For example, two second-grade teachers, Denise and Allison, were critical of the book *Supermarket* (Krull, 2000) because they felt it promoted the big supermarket; they both wanted students to think critically about how advertisers marketed products (a point also mentioned by six other teachers). Many of the teachers made connections with all the books about the different types of economic activities that were portrayed and they commented on how they would promote discussion about the choices families make when they shop in different types of stores.

Before beginning this study, I felt confident that I would find that teachers did not have much time in their schedule set aside for teaching social studies; this was confirmed by the participants. But according to several of the more experienced teachers in this study and the literature (Lintner, 2005; Stodolsky et al., 1991), this is not a new phenomenon that has been dictated solely by accountability demands. The more experienced teachers, such as Tulip, Grammy, Dan, and Anna (with an average of 32 years of teaching experience), said that they have always used literature to teach social studies because they never have enough time, and they have always tried to integrate it across their daily work. Grammy pointed out that in her second-grade classroom, “I

incorporate it in all the subject areas.” And first-grade teacher Tulip said, “Social studies is in everything almost.”

While the participants read the three picture books, a depth of knowledge about social studies was evident. Most of the teachers were also enthusiastic about social studies. Despite their knowledge and passion for the subject, many of the teachers felt constrained by their reading curriculum and said that they would have to follow it. Several participants mentioned it would be better if the reading curriculum provided teachers with ideas, discussion points, and questions that addressed social studies as well as literacy. Reading publishers have incorporated many selections that have a social studies theme or idea as an effort to push the value-added of two subjects in one. Researchers have found, however, that these efforts often fall short of providing meaningful social studies content (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008).

**Standards and curriculum maps.** In the two states where this study was conducted, the state standards include the four themes of history, geography, economics, and civics, but they do not address the ideas of such things as personal development or identity, themes outlined in the NCSS standards (1994). While some participants in this study talked about the state standards, few actually cited these as the basis for what was taught as social studies in their classrooms. The public school teachers relied on the school district-designed curriculum maps; this study did not examine these frameworks to see alignment to the state standards (although this would certainly be an interesting inquiry). Several teachers mentioned that they assumed that the curriculum designers did use the state standards. However, the individual teachers, for the most part, did not

consult the state social studies standards. The three teachers in the private schools put together their own curriculum and their references to standards were those national standards found in their curriculum materials; these were not the state standards (for two, a 15-year-old teacher edition of a curriculum referenced the NCSS standards (1994)). Most participants said that they had not actually looked at the state standards for social studies, but all knew that the standards had recently been or were presently being revised. In one of the states where this study was conducted, the state social studies standards were recently revised and, in the other state, the state standards committee was looking to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS; NNGACBP, 2010), which do not (yet) address social studies as a stand-alone content area for the elementary grades. As second-grade teacher Allison noted, in her school, the lack of social studies standards in the CCSS led teachers to believe that they did not need to address social studies. In the year before the interviews were conducted, the CCSS had created standards for literacy in social studies and science but these were only for grades 6-12 (NGACBP, 2010).

All of the teachers appeared familiar with literacy instruction practices. The participants often used the literacy-based terminology (e.g., comprehension strategies, text-to-self connections, think alouds, picture walks) and for most (20 out of 27 [74%]), some form of language arts was their most favorite subject to teach. Literacy courses are more prevalent in elementary teacher preparation programs than social studies courses (Stack & Burke, 2010) and there are many in-service opportunities related to literacy development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). It seems obvious that this training has paid off: The 27 participants in this study, whose experience in the classroom ranged from two

to 37 years, had similar practices for literacy instruction, used similar terminology, and most had a similar preference for teaching literacy-related subjects. This would indicate that they have had substantive professional development, over the years, in order to have all teachers who utilize current best practices. In contrast, for social studies instruction, there was a range of experience from not teaching it at all to incorporating it throughout the day. I think that the strong advocacy of the literacy community has enabled literacy development to lead the way in accountability measurement, carving out large amounts of time in the daily elementary schedule. Of course, literacy is essential to student success but content such as social studies provides the grist that helps literacy development, by enhancing background knowledge necessary for literacy and boosting enjoyment of learning (Stack & Burke, 2010; von Zastrow & Janc, 2004). One of the unintended consequences of focusing on literacy has been that there is even less focus on social studies which has languished for decades on the “back burner” (Houser, 1995) of elementary curriculum. The point to see is that professional development of elementary teachers has enabled the implementation of research-based literacy practices. These teachers (and others) are now primed to accept and implement the Common Core State Standards (NGACBP, 2010).

Professional development is seen as key to advancing teacher effectiveness as it creates awareness and understanding (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009, 2010; Killion & Hirsh, 2012). Change in teaching social studies will not come about until there is more awareness of how important the subject is. It will not be effectively integrated with children’s literature until it is done in a systematic and purposeful manner. Elementary

teachers, as seen in this study, have social studies content understandings to share with their students. Some in this study do so already throughout the day; others are reticent to emphasize social studies as they are teaching language arts lest they are faulted by reading coaches, mentors, or principals (all variously mentioned by participants). Adding more children's literature, particularly informational texts, may help but just have books may not be enough to develop effective use of the texts for teaching social studies. Having an introduction to or interaction with the resources may be needed to promote the use of books for teaching social studies and literacy. Lakeview teachers in this study were appreciative of the social studies curriculum outlined by their school district because it laid out expectations and provided specific books and instructions to develop social studies concepts.

Teachers are strapped for time and look for ways to make the most of the time they do have. Professional development can be in the form of workshops or through job-embedded activities to learn about accessing databases with content-specific literacy resources. These efforts do not have to entail time away from the classroom but could come as need-based, on-demand learning provided online. Resources are needed to link teachers to reviews of texts to teach specific content that focus on the big ideas and essential questions of social studies in order for teachers to focus instruction on social studies when reading children's literature. This would entail development of appropriate resources such as making the NCSS Notable trade books list into a searchable document, making it more interactive and providing access for a variety of topics. Teachers may actually have sufficient resources, as indicated by Greenville second-grade teacher

Allison's report of the unused resources for science and social studies at her school, but they may not be aware of how to use them well. Notable books for teaching social studies are undoubtedly sitting on school library shelves but teachers may not be aware of this rich resource.

Taking the tack to use resources to promote both social studies and literacy would take coordinated efforts of curriculum planners and staff developers. The Common Core State Standards provided integrated standards for literacy in the content areas but they only start at grade 6. Why do these not include the lower grades as well? Allison said that teachers in her school think social studies is not important because they were not included in the Common Core. This would be another unintended consequence of the standards. Just like students need explicit instruction to learn new strategies, teachers may benefit from explicit ways to integrate social studies with language arts. This has been noted for the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (Killion & Hirsh, 2012). As second-grade Clearview teacher Laura said, "I just didn't think of this book [*Daisy Comes Home*, Brett, 2002] for teaching social studies, but it really is now that I look at it."

Teachers have the understanding – they just need to feel that they have permission to and perhaps the prompting to look at literature in broader ways. Teachers seem to naturally make connections and find ways to tie content into literacy. The acceptance of the Common Core State Standards show that change can happen relatively quickly and can be accepted if teachers see the purpose and benefits. Such purposeful change is needed for elementary social studies instruction.

## **Findings Framework**

The conceptual framework based on the literature review and found in Chapter 2 was revised based on the findings detailed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6; it is graphically depicted in Figure 8.1 below. Many of the influential factors were not directly mentioned by the participants but were inferred from the responses on the questionnaire and the interview. For example, all of the participants noted that social studies instruction was very limited in their schools, with at least two mentioning that social studies was “not well represented” (Katy) or not “super robust” (Ms. B.), but no one specifically used the phrase “marginalization of elementary social studies.” Their experiences as students were only referred to by their ranking of subjects as students themselves. This was not explored further in this study and would be something to focus on in future research on teaching social studies in the primary grades. The literature holds that most elementary teachers remember limited social studies; their memories either focus on reading textbooks to recall information, completing fun projects, or not doing social studies at all (Schell & Fisher, 2007).

The main change reflected in the findings framework is that literacy curriculum demands may limit coverage of social studies content more than any other factor. The individual factors may influence whether the teacher will be predisposed to teaching social studies, but the idea that a teacher needed to like to teach social studies did not seem to be a determining factor. Only two teachers ranked social studies as a favorite subject when they were a student, and only one ranked it as the favorite subject to teach.

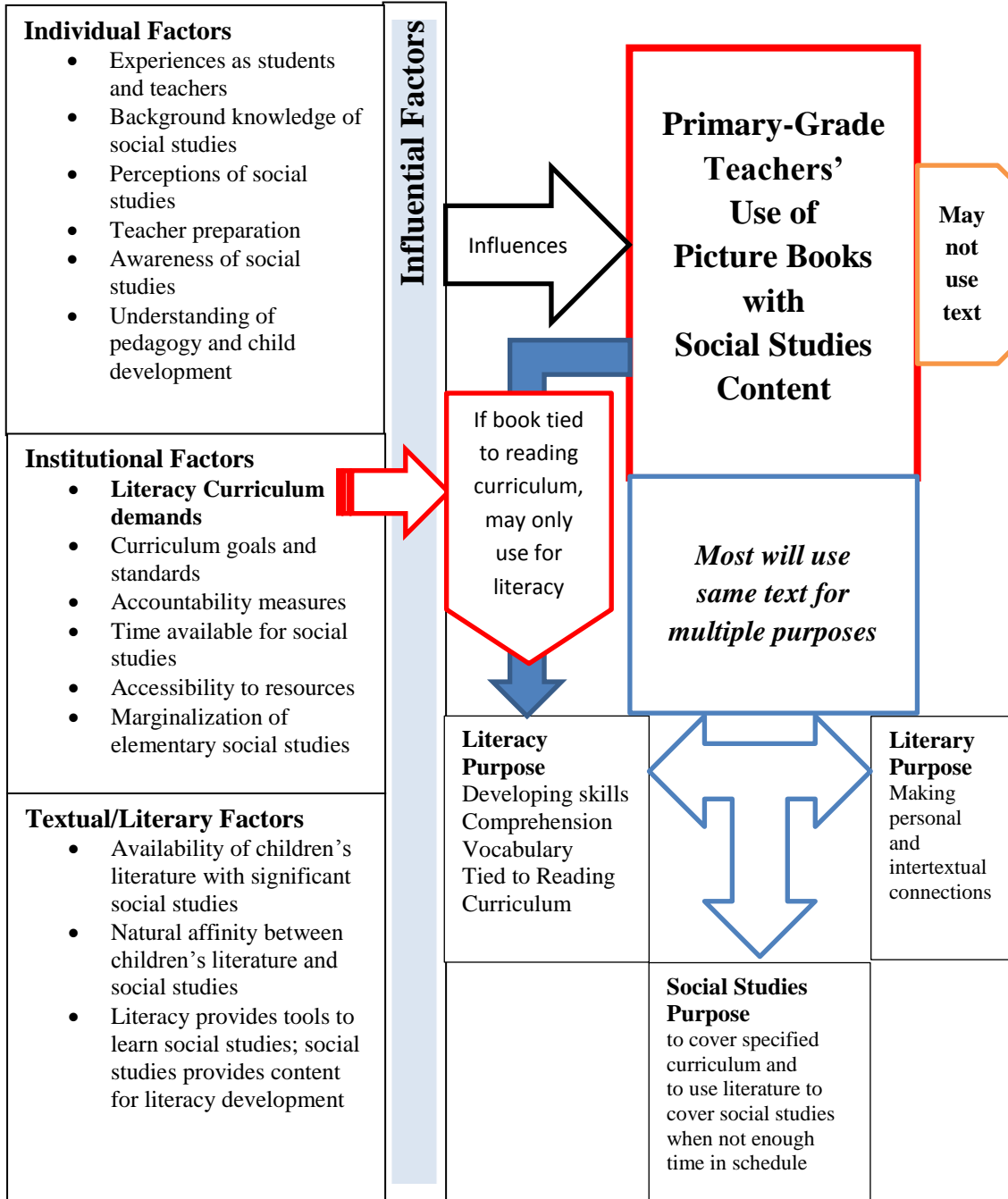
However, all the participants in this study were able to focus on meaningful social studies content in the three books, as indicated by the numerous content-related comments.

There was much discussion, during the interviews, about the time constraints that teachers were under for covering social studies but there were teachers who managed to incorporate social studies throughout the day, including during their literacy blocks. Some teachers, however, were very concerned about their obligation to follow the literacy curriculum even if there were content connections in the selections being read. This connection to a published literacy curriculum outweighed concerns for state standards and seems to abdicate local control of what is done in a classroom to “outside experts.”

Teachers may only focus on the social studies content if it related specifically to their social studies curriculum, which would be limited in many cases (see Appendix Q for a list of topics covered in different school districts). All teachers, however, were willing and able (as seen by the number of social studies comments) to make social studies connections with their literature selections, particularly during read aloud time. At least 10 teachers mentioned that literacy skills are tools for learning content and can be developed concurrently; other participants may consider this to be true as well but did not mention it specifically.

Figure 8.1

Graphic Depiction of Findings Framework



## **Implications**

The impact of time constraints on the teaching of elementary social studies cannot be underestimated. Accountability measures, which focus instructional time on reading and math, are a significant factor, but they are only part of the picture. Limited social studies instruction in the elementary school has been an ongoing issue for decades. It could be said that this has led to a generation of teachers who do not know much about social studies and who do not recognize the purposes of social studies. The participants in this study, however, did have content knowledge and did see value in teaching social studies. At the same time, most felt they had limited social studies outlined for them by their school districts. Many also felt constrained to use their literacy time only for literacy development even when there were opportunities to address social studies. Some of the participants did find ways to integrate social studies throughout their day. These teachers work as silent advocates who try to bring social studies in through reading children's literature and by teaching it even when it is not scheduled, as they see the wide-ranging impact of social studies.

Developing meaningful social studies in the elementary curriculum seems to depend more on local school districts than standards or the beliefs of an individual teacher. While the teacher determines how he/she teaches the curriculum (and is technically still the gatekeeper), the school district becomes the de facto gatekeeper, determining which state standards are addressed and what curriculum is used. The present findings may be instructive to decision makers in school districts who select resources for use in their schools. They hold the power to influence what happens in the

classroom and they abdicate this power when they select curriculum from publishers and then mandate that teachers use the curriculum only. The reading curriculum selected by a school district, for example, may contain readings with social studies themes; this makes a great selling point for school districts seeking to save time with curriculum that addresses a content area. Teachers, who previously felt they could select what they read to their students and what they focused on as they shared literature with their students, are now feeling constrained to limit their instruction to what the reading curriculum details. Teachers are treated as conduits, rather than professional educators who can make decisions about what is good for their students.

Considering the constraints that teachers perceive they are under to focus on literacy and the limited time available for social studies, I would recommend that each school district needs to establish the expectation that social studies instruction is regularly provided for all elementary students. This may require an examination of current practice within the school districts. Literacy development time should include content integration. Professional development may be needed to help teacher learn to effectively address social studies content with literacy skill development (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2009; Killion & Hirsh, 2012).

Furthermore, district administrators must see that curriculum meets state standards for all subjects, not just the tested ones. They need to select curriculum resources that allow teachers to make choices that exercise their training and expertise to make sound decisions for their students. Strict adherence to a selected curriculum shortchanges both students and teachers because one curriculum cannot possibly fit the

needs of all students in a school district. Perhaps the school district wants to be able to have the publishers as their scapegoat if their students do not measure up when they are tested; the publisher will blame the teachers for not following their “proven” curriculum plan. Unfortunately, students and teachers both lose in this blame game.

Another recommendation would be to develop social studies professional development programs for teachers, implemented through in-service time, online interaction, and content-specific conferences or workshop, many of which are provided by content-related organizations such as the NCSS. Teachers may benefit from membership in both state and national discipline-based associations but may need some assistance or incentive to join. The teachers in this study had no idea about the NCSS and had a very limited idea about the purpose of social studies. Still, they could focus on social studies content in the three books read. They expressed eagerness to include more social studies in their daily work, particularly through children’s literature. Some (like Tulip, Grammy, and Allison) thought to do this on their own but others (like Laura, Monitess, and Nancy) said that if a book was used in reading class they would not necessarily focus on using it to develop social studies as well.

### **Further Research**

One of the aims of this study was to see the planning process used by teachers as they read trade books; other studies have focused on the enacted curriculum and did not look at what teachers planned to do (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008; Penn, 2000; Ramos, 2003). If social studies was not well-represented during classroom observations, one could get the impression that the teacher was not interested or capable of focusing on social studies,

particularly when significant social studies ideas in the literature are ignored. Certainly there is research to support the ideas that elementary teachers are not well-trained in social studies (Bennett, 1993; Olwell & Raphael, 2006) and that they do not like to teach it (Stodolsky et al., 1991; Zhao & Hoge, 2005). The preservice teachers in Sunal and Sunal (2007-8) questioned their cooperating teachers about their practice and found that many felt compelled by accountability measures to focus mainly on reading, writing, and math, while others thought they were doing all they could by using the integrated reading series. By examining the reports of the preservice teachers, it was evident that there was a wide range of teaching competence represented but even the teachers who thought there needed to be more focus on social studies were constrained by the reading curriculum. Looking at the planning process of the participants allowed me to see that they were indeed quite capable of focusing on social studies and many were eager to do so.

Researchers and teachers need to appreciate the integrative nature of social studies. Research inquiries about time devoted to social studies may shortchange what is going on in the classroom as only the scheduled time for social studies is reported. As participants Grammy and Tulip emphasized, social studies can be in everything. Researchers who only observe in times set for social studies may miss the social studies opportunities that occur across the curriculum, including those that are done by design as well as chance. Teachers also may have a limited view of social studies so they may not value what they are doing as social studies, such as Kindergarten teacher who declared that character building was not social studies (a debatable point in the literature).

Researchers can document social studies instruction and opportunities and then enlighten or reinforce to teachers about all the times they could incorporate it in their day.

This study lays the groundwork for many other pursuits. It would be interesting to see this research conducted with teachers in other locales, including urban schools or in states where social studies is a tested subject. It would also be informative to see the planning processes of teachers in upper elementary grades. There also is much unexplored data from the questionnaires; conducting longer interviews with these participants would explore many interesting ideas.

This research could also be expanded to include observations of several of these teachers in their interactions with their students, particularly the ones who said that they incorporate social studies throughout the day. Case studies based on any of these participants would be intriguing to me. An interesting project would be a longitudinal study with a new teacher, such as Allison, as she tries to integrate her passion for social studies and negotiate the accountability demands of her district. Individual case studies would expand on the findings of this study.

One of the limitations of this study is that it focuses solely on the teacher and not on students. Conducting a study of teachers reading aloud to students would bring the teachers' plans to fruition. Further research could explore how students in the primary grades react to and engage with texts to gain social studies understandings.

In this study, the teachers were given books to read (similar to district curriculum mandates); a study with teachers selecting the resources that fit best into what they are teaching would be more authentic. This would allow researchers to examine how teachers

select texts and what they focus on during the selection process. This might also highlight features they would like to see to more effectively teach social studies with children's literature.

### **Significance of the Study**

Critics often point out that the elementary social studies lacks substance and that elementary teachers either do not know enough or do not like social studies enough to teach it in meaningful ways. Such concerns play into the idea that others need to control what goes on in the classroom. Research that suggests teachers are not focusing on social studies when they read children's literature calls this strategy into question. My research gives a different vision of the state of elementary social studies. By focusing on the intent of the teachers in the primary grades, where social studies is arguably the most ignored subject, I found that teachers were knowledgeable about social studies and would eagerly teach social studies if they felt they had the time.

Reading and discussing children's literature should not be the entirety of teaching social studies in any grade, no matter how well it is done. It does provide a means of bringing or keeping social studies in the primary curriculum when there is no time specifically in the schedule, but only if done in a purposeful manner. This study coincides with research suggesting that students in the primary grades can learn social studies from reading children's literature, as those studies all had teachers who purposefully planned to focus on social studies (Levstik & Yessin, 1990; Macken, 2003; Osborne, 1995; Williams et al., 2007). By investigating the factors teachers think influence their ability to teach social studies in the primary grades, this study has given voice to the teachers who

may feel as marginalized by district mandates, curriculum demands, and accountability measures, as by the subject itself. The teachers in this study reported that they took advantage of opportunities to teach social studies through the literature they read in their classrooms, because they know that may be the only time for social studies that they have. They know they must abide by their district's curriculum maps; most have only vague familiarity with the state standards.

Lakeview first-grade teacher Denise said that she teaches mapping during math and asked, "It doesn't matter, right? Just that you do it, not what you call it." Of course, giving the students opportunities to learn social studies throughout the day is an excellent way to develop social studies understandings; however, when teachers are not sure that something is social studies or they do not let students know that they are learning social studies, the subject itself is marginalized. Researchers may ask teachers or students about how much social studies they do and get underestimates of the actual time due to a lack of understanding about the subject. While teachers may integrate it into literacy or math or even art, not emphasizing that social studies instruction is taking place, by purposefully planning lessons that incorporate social studies standards, may continue to keep social studies on the back burner as much as any accountability measures.

This study points to the need for school districts to examine whether their curriculum frameworks support meaningful social studies, perhaps by looking at the alignment with state social studies standards. Resources such as the extensive reading programs that purport to be integrative solutions must also be examined to see if they are actually integrating content or just providing window dressing. Literacy texts could be

made to integrate social studies (and science) to promote content development as well as literacy development. More resources and freedom for teachers to use these as they think best are needed. It is my great hope that decision makers in school districts will recognize that empowering their teachers by giving them choices, professional development time, and resources will enable them to teach as they know they should and that the marginalization of elementary social studies will cease to be an issue.

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**Appendix A**  
**Select Elementary Teacher Preparation Programs**  
**Requirements for Teaching Social Studies**  
**2011-12 School Year**

<b>Institute of Higher Education</b>	<b>Content Course(s)</b> (1 semester each)	<b>Teacher Education Course(s)</b>
College A	Humanities core requirement Social Science core requirement Minnesota American Indians	K-6 Methods: Social Studies/Thematic Studies
College B	2 Humanities courses 1 Social Science course 1 Inter-cultural course	Social Studies Pedagogy
College C	U.S. History World History Sociology Psychology	Elementary Social Studies
University D	Requires co-major in liberal arts discipline	Teaching Social Studies in the Elementary and Middle Schools
University E	Democratic Citizenship (chose history, economics, political science or sociology) 3 Social or Behavioral Sciences	Inst. Social Studies
University F	Psychology Ways of Knowing Social Sciences History Our Globalizing World	Teaching Social Studies in Elementary Schools
University G	Second major required History Social Analysis Human Diversity	Teaching Social Studies and Fine Arts

**Appendix B**  
**Community and School Classification**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Definition*</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>School District</b>	<b>Free-Reduced Lunch</b>	<b>Percent of White Students</b>
Large Suburb	Territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with population of 250,000 or more	Hillside	Hillside Academy	Private	Private	96%
		Southside	Southside Elementary	Southside	5%	89%
		Bayside	Bayside Elementary	Bayside	8%	92%
		Westside	Westside Elementary	Westside	21%	89%
Town Fringe	Territory inside an urban cluster that is less than or equal to 10 miles from an urbanized area	Riverview	Riverview Elementary	Riverview	14%	94%
			Rock View Elementary	Riverview	28%	88%
			Ridgeview Elementary	Riverview	15%	94%
		Clear View	Clear View Elementary	Westside	15%	98%
		Lakeview	Lakeview Elementary	Lakeview	9%	95%
			Northview Elementary	Lakeview	12%	93%
			Higher View Academy	Private	Private	94%
Rural Fringe	Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster	Northfield	Northfield Elementary	Riverview	9%	97%
		Eastfield	Eastfield Elementary	Eastfield	4%	79%
Town Distant	Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 10 miles and less than or equal to 35 miles from an urbanized area	Greenville	Greenville Elementary	Greenville	34%	92%

\*SOURCE: Office of Management and Budget (2000). Standards for Defining Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas; Notice. Federal Register (65) No. 249. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ruraled/page2.asp>

**Appendix C**  
**Profiles of Participants**  
*Kindergarten Teachers*

School	Name	Code	Years Teach	Highest Degree	UG Major	SSt Rank of 7	Favorite Subject To Teach	Favorite Subject as Student
Westside	April	K.2.3	3	B.A.	Marketing	5	Math	Math
Lakeview	Cheryl	K.6.2	4	M.A.	Architect.	5	Writing	Reading
Northview	Dan	K.8.3	27	M.A.	Elem	6	Reading	Math
Bayside	Gina	K.9.2	11	M.A.	Comm	6	LangArts	Reading
Eastfield	Katy	K.1.1	6	B.S.	Elem	4	Reading	Reading
Southside	Linda	K.5.3	7	B.S.	ECE	7	LangArts	Reading
Rock View	Sharon	K.4.1	8	B.S.	ECE	12	Reading	Reading
Lakeview	Tracy	K.7.1	20	M.A.	Elem	5	Reading	Art
Clearview	Vivian	K.3.2	2	B.S.	Elem	1	Soc St	Soc St

*First Grade Teachers*

Hillside	Beth	1.1.2	12	B.S.	Educ	7	Writing	Reading
Lakeview	Denise	1.5.1	6	B.S.	Elem	-	Reading	Reading
HigherView	Jessie	1.7.2	4	B.S.	Elem	7	Reading	Reading
Lakeview	Kelly	1.3.3	2	B.A.	Elem	6	Math	Math
Clearview	Melody	1.9.3	7	B.S.	Develop	6	Math	Reading
Bayside	Ms. B	1.8.1	9	M.A.	ECE	5	Reading	?
Lakeview	Paige	1.2.1	3	B.S.	Elem	2	Reading	Reading
Lakeview	Sandy	1.6.3	25	M.A.	Elem	4	Math	Reading
HigherView	Tulip	1.4.2	37	B.S.	Elem	-	LangArts	Art

*Second Grade Teachers*

Greenville	Allison	2.8.2	2	B.S.	Elem	2	LangArts	Soc St
Lakeview	Anna	2.1.3	32	M.Ed.	Elem	2	Reading	Art
Ridgeview	Debbie	2.3.1	11	M.Ed.	Elem	4	Reading	Reading
Eastfield	Grammy	2.6.1	37	M.S.	Home Ec	2	All	All
Riverview	Jodi	2.9.1	5	M.Ed.	Elem	2	Reading	Reading
Clearview	Laura	2.2.2	17	M.S.	ECE	6	Math	Reading
Ridgeview	Michelle	2.4.3	9	M.Ed.	Elem	2	Reading	Math
Northfield	Monitess	2.7.3	18	M.A.	ECE	5	Reading	P.E.
Ridgeview	Nancy	2.5.2	8	M.Ed.	Elem	4	Reading	Reading

## Appendix D Teacher Questionnaire

This study is about how primary grade teachers use picture books across the primary curriculum. As part of this study, I would like to have some background information on the participants. All answers will be confidential; you will be referred to in the research report by a pseudonym (you may select the name below). Please feel free to answer only the questions that you are comfortable addressing.

Teacher's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Pseudonym for Report \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: M F

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Subjects teaching: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years: As a teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ At this grade level: \_\_\_\_\_ At this school: \_\_\_\_\_

Other grade levels taught and time at each: \_\_\_\_\_

**Education:** Please list the colleges/universities from which you have received degrees or teacher education classwork. Include the degrees received with majors/minors as applicable. Place a check mark in the right hand column to indicate from where you received your teacher certification.

College/University	Degree	Major and Minor (place parentheses around Minor)	Teacher Cert.?

Any additional information about your educational experiences not included in table:

### Elementary Teaching:

How do you use children's literature or trade books in your classroom?

Approximately how often do you read aloud to students in your classroom? How long each time?

Please describe how you usually prepare, if at all, for reading aloud to your class:

What types of books do you tend to read aloud?

Estimate the total number of texts in your classroom library:

Estimate the percentage of texts in your classroom library that are:

Narrative fiction \_\_\_\_\_ Narrative nonfiction \_\_\_\_\_ Informational texts \_\_\_\_\_

Please rank order the following 7 subjects according to what you like to teach  
(1 = most like to teach; 7 = least like to teach)

____ Reading	____ Science	____ Math
____ Social Studies	____ Spelling	____ Writing
____ Language Arts	____ Other _____	

What was your favorite subject as an elementary student?

What was your favorite subject as a high school student?

What was your favorite subject in college/university?

If you could start your career over, would you choose to go into education? Why or why not?

What would you say is your biggest challenge as a teacher?

## **Appendix E**

### **Interview Protocol**

#### **Materials Needed for each Interview:**

- Two digital recorders with back-up batteries
- Hardcover copy of each text (Brett, 2002; DiSalvo-Ryan, 2000; Krull, 2001)
- Photocopies (with pages numbered) of each text
- Text feature examples (see question 19)
- Pens, paper
- Sticky notes
- Consent forms
- Selection of picture books for gift (titles vary)

#### **Introduction:**

Researcher: “Thank you for agreeing to be part of this study. I will be recording this interview and will transcribe this later. I will send you a copy of the transcript for you to okay. This consent form, which I sent you in an email, explains the research study and I will go through each point and ask you to sign this. I have a copy for you to keep.”

- Give copy of consent form, go through each point, and get participant’s signature.

“I am interested in how teachers plan to use picture books in the primary curriculum. I have three picture books that I would like to share with you. I will be asking you to read each and think aloud as you read each book to say how you would use the book in your classroom.”

#### **Practice with Think Aloud:**

“Are you familiar with the think-aloud process? I’d like you to practice this process by adding these two numbers [618 + 583], talking through how you are solving the problem.”

- Give paper and pencil; this simple task is to allow participant to become familiar and comfortable with the procedure.

#### **Think Aloud Process:**

“I will be taking short notes on copies of the books so I can tell which page you are talking about when I do the transcription. I want to assure you that everything will be held in confidence and that there is no right or wrong way to do the think aloud or to answer any questions. I am interested in what you think.”

“I’d like to take one book at a time because each teacher gets the books in a different order. Here is the first book. Are you familiar with this book? How?”

- Give books in order as specified in Counterbalanced Design

**For Book One:** “I’d like you to read the book and think aloud about what you would comment on or any question you would ask if you were reading this to your class. If you like, you could use these sticky notes to write comments and mark any important places in the book.”

**Questions after Book One:**

1. “Would you use this book in your class?”
2. “How did you decide what to focus on with this book?”
3. “What else might you say or do if you were using this book to teach social studies?”

**For Books Two and Three:** “I’d like you to read this next book and think aloud about what you would do or say if you were using this book to teach social studies.”

**Questions after Book Two and Book Three:**

1. “Would you use this book in your class?”
2. “How did you decide what to focus on with this book?”

**Interview Questions – Texts (after all books are read):**

1. “Can you think of any themes or big ideas of social studies in these books?”
2. “All three books were listed on the Notable Social Studies Tradebooks for Young People list. Have you ever heard of this? Have you ever heard of the National Council for the Social Studies? Have you ever seen *Social Studies and the Young Learner*? This is the journal for elementary teachers and it gives great ideas for teaching social studies in the elementary grades.” Give a copy for the teacher to keep.

**Interview Questions – Primary Curriculum**

1. “How much time do you have to teach social studies in your classroom? Do you have enough time? Why/Why not?”
2. “What is in your social studies curriculum in the \_\_\_\_\_ grade? Where does the curriculum come from? Are you able to cover it all? Do you ever do more than what is in the curriculum? What do you do?”
3. “What resources do you use to teach social studies? Do you use children’s literature to teach social studies?”
4. “If you are reading something during your literacy block that has a social studies theme, do you bring in or focus on those social studies ideas? Why/Why not?”
5. “The research has shown that teachers say they are using children’s literature to teach social studies but are focusing more on teaching literacy. Why do you think this happens?”
6. “Can you think of anything that would be helpful for you to better use children’s literature to teach social studies?”
7. “Is there anything you would like to add about what we have discussed today?”

**Closing**

- Thank teacher and give copy of one of the selected books.
- Ask each teacher not to discuss the interview with the other teachers in the school until all interviews at the school have been completed.

**Appendix F**  
**Introductory Letter to School Principal**

Principal  
School  
Address

I am writing to ask for permission to do a short research study with primary grade teachers at [school]. I am a doctoral candidate in curriculum and instruction at the University of Minnesota. My interest is in literacy and social studies education. I have been a graduate instructor and supervisor of student teachers for the past four years; I have three years' experience teaching in Kindergarten and second grade. Currently I am an assistant professor in the teacher education department at C\_ College.

My research interest is in how primary grade teachers use picture books in the primary curriculum. Understanding this process may lead to more purposeful approaches to strengthen the curriculum both in literacy development and content areas.

If you are able to support my work, I will contact the primary grade teachers in your school via email and ask them to participate in my study. I will send each volunteer a brief demographic and interest questionnaire. Individual interviews will be set at the convenience of the teacher, preferably in your school so that teachers are comfortable with the setting. Teachers will be asked to think aloud while reading three different picture books and comment on how they would to plan to use the texts in the classroom. The teachers will be asked follow-up questions about the books and about their classroom practice with children's literature across the curriculum.

I will maintain strict confidentiality and use pseudonyms for all descriptive narrative, with participant checking of the interviews. As a small token of appreciation, each classroom teachers will be presented with a book for their classroom library.

I hope that you will agree to have your teachers participate in this study. I will email you in a few days to see if you have any questions. Feel free to contact me or my advisor, Dr. Patricia Avery (averyxxx@umn.edu; 612.625.xxxx). My contact information is harrxxxx@umn.edu and my cell number is 651-324-xxxx. Thank you in advance for your approval of this research study.

Sincerely,

Judith M. Harrington, M.Ed.

**Appendix G**  
**Introductory Email Letter to Key Teachers**

Teacher  
School

I am writing to ask for your help with a research project. I am looking to find several teachers (K-2) from schools in the area. I just need one hour of their time for individual interviews. I am interested in how primary grade teachers use picture books in the primary curriculum. I would like to schedule the interviews in May, at the convenience of each teacher.

I will be asking teachers to do a think aloud with 3 picture books and will record the interview for transcription. I will be looking for themes across responses and there are no right or wrong answers. I just want to know what teachers think. Teachers and schools will not be evaluated and all participant information will be confidential.

For each participant, I will present a book for the classroom as a small token of appreciation. I am attaching a flyer for you to share with colleagues and will be sending follow-up emails to them as well. I thought if I could reach out to you for help in promoting this, your colleagues would be more likely to participate and you could also ask your principal for me.

I look forward to working with you on this if you have the time. Thanks for your help.

*Judie Harrington*

Assistant Professor - Teacher Education  
C\_ College

## Appendix H Consent Form

Please read this document and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. The researcher is Judith Harrington, M.Ed., who is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Minnesota. This study is primarily for fulfilling the requirements for the doctoral dissertation.

**Background Information:** This research is meant to study how primary grade teachers plan to use picture books in the primary curriculum.

**Procedure:** As part of this study, primary grade teachers will be sent a demographic and interest questionnaire to complete and return by e-mail. The researcher will identify a mutually agreeable time and place for an individual interview. Interviews will last approximately one hour. Teachers will be asked to do a think-aloud task with three picture books. This means that as the teacher reads the picture books, he or she will “think aloud,” sharing any ideas or thoughts about the texts. After the “think-alouds,” the researcher will ask some additional follow-up questions about picture books and the primary curriculum. The researcher will take notes, make audio recordings of the interviews, and transcribe the interviews verbatim. Participants may ask that the digital recorder be turned off at any point during the interview. There are no “correct” answers to the interview questions.

**Risks of Being in the Study:** There are no known risks associated with this study.

**Confidentiality:**

Any personal information that may reveal your identity, such as your name or school district, will be kept confidential.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

You have the right to not to choose to participate in this study or to withdraw from this study after you have agreed to participate at any time of your choice during the study. You also have the right not to answer those questions posed by the researcher that you don’t want to give any answer or response.

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you have any questions please feel free to contact Judith Harrington at 651-324-xxxx or e-mail at harrxxxx@umn.edu. Also if you want to talk to someone other than the researcher, please feel free to contact Dr. Patricia G. Avery, the advisor for the researcher at averyxxx@umn.edu or phone 612-625-xxxx.

**Statement of Consent:** *I will give you a copy of this form to keep for your records.*

- I have read the above information. I have received answers to my questions. I consent to participate in the study.
- I do not wish to participate.

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Judith M. Harrington, Researcher**

## Appendix I Instructions for Inter-Rater Review

My study is looking at what 27 primary grade (K-2) teachers focus on as they read picture books for use in their classrooms. I presented each teacher with three books in a different order and asked them to think aloud about how they would use the book. For the first book, they were asked to read the book and comment on anything that they would focus on if they used the book in their classroom. For the second and third books, they were asked to focus specifically on what they might do if they were using the book to teach social studies. Following the think-aloud tasks, I asked some questions to find out about the teachers' perceptions of their social studies curriculum. Some teachers brought up curriculum issues as they read the books.

The interviews for this study were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Each interview was then segmented and encoded on six different main categories, which are outlined here with a clarifying description:

Abbrev	Category	Major Sub-Categories
LS	Literacy Skills	These refer to reading strategies, comprehension, vocabulary, making predictions, discussions about the author, writing, and anything related to reading instruction.
RR	Reader Response – Literary Appreciation	This category is for responses to text such as evaluation, appreciation, text-to-text or text-to-self connections, making inferences, making judgments
SSt	Social Studies	Comments related to economics, history, geography, civics, communities, personal development
O	Other Content	Math, science, health, and other personal connections
DE	Descriptive	Comments of a descriptive nature, details, picture descriptions or noting the storyline
CD	Curriculum Discussion	This category encompasses all comments related to curriculum, school processes, and anything related to the other categories but not related directly to the texts. Sub-categories include the other categories such as Curriculum Discussion – Social Studies

The analysis of the comments focused on what teachers would do or say and not to necessarily classify the type of comment they made. Other analyses of think-alouds have classified the type of statements that respondents make; for example, if the respondent refers to something not in the text, it would be classified as an “inference.” In this study, inferences made by the teachers were coded as such but if they said that they would encourage students to make an inference, this was coded the same (“Literacy Skills-Inference”).

There were many subcategories for each category, which you may note, but I am most interested in the identification of main themes or categories. The segments for the interview protocols vary in length; there are phrases, sentences, and paragraphs coded as segments so it might be confusing for you to identify what to encode. I have put the two interviews that I would like you to encode into a format that sets apart the segments that I looked at and provides a place to record what you would encode in each segment. There could be multiple coding for one segment, such

as a focus on “reader response” when there is a text-to-text connection and a focus on “social studies” if the segment also refers to teaching about economics.

I have a table for the review of two different interviews. The first interview is with Beth, a talkative first grade teacher. For this interview, I have included the coding that I did for what she said regarding the first book. I am only coding the comments made by the teacher, not by me as the researcher. **Please write in the column if you agree with the coding by writing “same” or write in a different coding if you would like to;** there is a column for my comments and a column for you to add your comments.

I have color coded the segments that I coded (as above) for the first book to help you see where different themes are coded. I am combining Literacy Skills and Literary Appreciation so they are both in yellow. If you would like to color code the other segments you may but you do not have to do such. For the other books in Beth’s interview and the second interview with Katy (which is much shorter), **please just type the abbreviation for the main category in the column provided (LS for Literacy Skills, RR for Reader Response/Literary Appreciation, SST for Social Studies, DE for Descriptive, CD for Curriculum Description and O for Other.**

The sub-categories listed below might help you to understand what the main categories refer to. These came from the literature review, the pilot study, and from comments made by the teachers. I used NVivo 10 software, which allowed me to highlight sections and drag them into the sub-categories. Having to type them each time can be time-consuming so I do not expect that you will do this, but you may if it helps you process better.

We will undoubtedly not agree on all the coding; I just have to show that I have critical colleagues who would agree with the majority of my choices (shooting for 80%). I will calculate the level of inter-rater agreement by comparing the types of categories that we both select. Your comments and selections will help me to adjust my codes if you bring up things that I did not. This will help the reliability of my study.

**Notes on the transcription:** Page numbers are coded for each book (A-B-C) so page two on Book A is A2. My comments which were made to encourage continual responses are in brackets with italics [*um hmm*]. The grey sections are comments I made and are not being coded.

**Appendix J**  
**Segment of Coded Interview for Inter-Rater Agreement**

**Inter-rater Coding of Two Interviews**

**Colleague: Jessica (SSt Educator)**

<b>Transcript</b>	<b>Researcher Coding</b>	<b>Colleague Coding</b>	<b>Sub Cat</b>	<b>Main Cat</b>
Interview 1: Teacher 1.1.2 Beth, First grade teacher				
<b>B.1 – Book B, <i>Grandpa’s Corner Store</i></b>				
<b>Beth</b> I can already tell by looking at this that I have a unit where we talk about maps [um hmm] and so, and it’s language arts so this would be a good read aloud to use as a cross-curricular umm connection. But also you know in our unit in reading that goes along with it.	1 SSt- Mapping LS-Reading instruction	Same	1	1
Usually when I introduce a story I’ll read the title and look at the author information too, read to them. So kind of looking at where the author’s written it. How they drew the pictures. So I try to touch on that too just so we get to see.	2 LS Author or Illustrator	Same	1	1
[B2-B3] One of the things I know with our demographic is that I’d stop and ask them “Have you’ve ever been downtown or in a place where they have a community of stores like that where they’ve seen stores that are side by side by side?”	3 SSt Community	Same	1	1
[B17-B18] And this is really interesting too how they talk about paying when they can and about the form of community here, you know?	15 SSt Payment – Bills SSt Community	SSt Communi ty	.5	1

The main category agreement was graded as “1” if both agreed. The sub-category grade is “1” if both agree and “.5” if the main category is agreed but there is a different sub-category.

**SSt = green; LS = yellow**

**Appendix K – Tables of Frequencies and Percentages of Comments on Content**

Table 4.2

*Teachers' Content Comments on First Book Read (Not Cued for Social Studies), by Frequency and Percentage of Main Categories*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Total Lit</b>
Literacy Skills	257	32%	48%
Reader Response	129	16%	
Social Studies	320	39%	
Descriptive Responses	19	2%	
Other Responses	35	4%	
Curriculum during Book Reading	52	6%	
<b>Total Comments</b>	<b>812</b>		

Table 4.3

*Teachers' Content Comments to Second Book Read (After Cued for Social Studies), by Frequency and Percentage of Main Categories*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Total Lit</b>
Literacy Skills	167	20%	32%
Reader Response	102	12%	
Social Studies	495	60%	
Descriptive Responses	17	2%	
Other Responses	27	3%	
Curriculum during Book Reading	14	2%	
<b>Total Comments</b>	<b>822</b>		

Table 4.4

*Teachers' Content Comments to Third Book Read (After Cued for Social Studies), by Frequency and Percentage of Main Categories*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Total Lit</b>
Literacy Skills	212	24%	41%
Reader Response	148	17%	
Social Studies	466	53%	
Descriptive Responses	13	1%	
Other Responses	21	2%	
Curriculum during Book Reading	18	2%	
<b>Total Comments</b>	<b>878</b>		

Table 4.5

*Teachers' Content Comments on Three Books – Overall Totals, Frequency and Percentage of Main Categories*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Total Lit</b>
Literacy Skills	637	26%	41%
Reader Response	367	15%	
Social Studies	1217	50%	
Descriptive Responses	49	2%	
Other Responses	82	3%	
Curriculum during Book Reading	84	3%	
<b>Total Comments</b>	<b>2436</b>		

Table 4.6

*Comments on Book A, Daisy Comes Home, Frequency and Percentage of Main Categories*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Book A</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Total Lit</b>
Literacy Skills	315	34%	51%
Reader Response	161	17%	
Social Studies	386	42%	
Descriptive Responses	27	3%	
Other Responses	4	<1%	
Curriculum during Book Reading	31	3%	
<b>Total Comments</b>	<b>924</b>		

Table 4.7

*Comments on Book B, Grandpa's Corner Store – Frequencies and Percentages of Main Categories*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Book B</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Total Lit</b>
Literacy Skills	155	21%	33%
Reader Response	93	12%	
Social Studies	454	61%	
Descriptive Responses	10	1%	
Other Responses	6	<1%	
Curriculum during Book Reading	27	4%	
<b>Total Comments</b>	<b>745</b>		

Table 4.8

*Comments on Book C, Supermarket – Frequencies and Percentages of Main Categories*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Book C</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Total Lit</b>
Literacy Skills	160	19%	34%
Reader Response	125	15%	
Social Studies	441	53%	
Descriptive Responses	12	1%	
Other Responses	73	9%	
Curriculum during Book Reading	26	3%	
<b>Total Comments</b>	<b>837</b>		

Table 4.9

*Comments on First Book Read by Book Title – Frequencies and Percentages of Social Studies Comments*

	<b>Social Studies Comments</b>	<b>Total Comments</b>	<b>Percentage of Social Studies</b>
Book A, <i>Daisy Comes Home</i> (Brett, 2002)	46	243	20%
Book B, <i>Grandpa's Corner Store</i> (DiSalvo-Ryan, 2000)	132	248	53%
Book C, <i>Supermarket</i> (Krull, 2001)	131	293	48%

<b>Appendix L – Categories and Sub-Categories of Responses to Content and Curriculum</b>		
<b>Literacy Skills</b>	<b>Reader Response -Literary Appreciation</b>	<b>Social Studies</b>
Author, Illustrator 17 Character Actions 8 Character Feelings 39 Character Identification 2 Clarifying 20 Comprehension questions 20 Descriptive Words 13 Environmental Print 3 Evidence 6 Facts 9 Figures of Speech 16 Genre Identification 12 <b>Inference 63</b> Informational Text 18 Making meaning 15 <b>Meaning from Pictures 58</b> Opinion 8 Prediction 90 Preview/PreReading 13 Prior knowledge Problem Solution 24 Pronunciation 5 Punctuation 3 Purpose 5 Reading Instruction 14 Sequence 10 Setting 10 Summarize 3 Text features 16 Title 13 Vocabulary 47 Writing 24	Affective Responses 33+ Approval 16 Author familiarity 32 Build suspense 10 Cool/Fun facts 18 Disapproval 7 Draw a Picture 2 Enjoyable, Have Fun With 5 I love this 9 I wonder 21 Imagery 6 Interesting 10 Literature exposure 3 Overwhelming, A lot of Info 26 Picture quality 15 Read aloud 12 Students would love 15 Sweet, Cute Story 21 <b>Text-to-Self Connections 45</b> Text-to-Text Connections 34 Turn and Talk 10	Celebrations – Holidays 21 Civics-Bullying, Teasing 30 Civics-Community Bldg 3 Civics-Community Helpers 13 Civics-Fairness 9 Civics-Neighbors 5 Compare-Contrast SS 4 <b>Connections – SS 72</b> Content Vocab – SS 3 <b>Cult Univ – Community 56</b> Cult Universals-Family 25 Cult Universals – Food 19 Cult Universals – Shelter 7 Cultures – Build Background 28 Cultures-Comp/Contrast 20 Cultures-Multicult refer 20 Cultures-Similar/Differ 47 Econ – Costs, prices 9 Econ – Decision making 26 Econ – Discussion 22 <b>Econ – Food process, distr 90</b> Econ – Goods/services 20 <b>Econ – Jobs 41</b> Econ – Marketing, advertising 12 <b>Econ – Markets 43</b> Econ – Money 5 Econ – Payment, bills 6 Econ – Poverty 2 <b>Econ – Stores 130</b> Econ – Supply/demand 2 Econ – Trade, barter 4 Econ – Wants/needs 14 Field Trips SS 7 Geo – Directions 7 <b>Geo - Mapping 73</b> Geo – Places, Regions 26 Good Messages 16 History – American Indian 10 <b>History-Change over time 42</b>

		History-Connections 10 History-People, Heroes 6
<b>Social Studies (cont'd)</b>	<b>Other Content</b>	<b>SSt Curriculum Discussion</b>
<p>Inclusion 2  Meaning of artifacts 8  Pers Dev-Character Dev 21  Pers Deve – Chores 7  Pers Dev-Confidence, Courage 24  Pers Dev-Cooperation 2  Pers Dev-Empathy 6  <b>Pers Dev-Feelings 45</b>  Pers Dev-Friendship 11  Pers Dev – Helping others 36  Pers Dev – Manners 11  Pers Dev – Persistence 4  Prior Knowledge – SS 19  Stewardship, Environment 8</p>	<p><b>Math connections 34</b>  Math - Making surveys 4  Math – Graphing 10  Science connections 22  Health connections 26</p> <p><b>Descriptive</b>  Details 12  Picture description 22  Storyline 15</p> <p><b>Curriculum Discussion</b>  Connections 5  Content Literacy 3  Differentiation 5  Health Curriculum 1  Importance of Info Text 11  Importance of Literature 6  <b>Integration 29</b>  Like Literature  Literacy Curriculum 18  Literacy Demands 7  Literature Selection 21  Online Resources 2  Standards 16  Testing-Accountability 1  Themes 7</p>	<p><b>Social Studies Curriculum Discussion</b>  Biographies 2  Bullying 1  Character Development 3  Community 10  Content Vocab 1  Culture 12  Curriculum Maps 4  Economics 8  Families 2  Field Trips 2  Friendship 2  Geography 10  Historic Heroes 4  History 6  Holidays – Celebrations 2  Importance of SS 6  Junior Achievement 3  Like-Dislike Social Studies 6  Mexico 3  Native Americans 10  No Mandated SS Curriculum 2  Own Curriculum 1  School Created Curriculum 22  Service Projects 3  Social Studies Curriculum 125  Social Studies not strong 4  Social Studies Resources 6  Themes 9  <b>Time Available 43</b></p>

**Appendix M**  
**Percentages of Language Arts and Social Studies Responses Per Grade Level**

*Kindergarten Teachers*

Interview Number	Name	Code	Bk A - LA	Bk A - SSSt	Bk B - LA	Bk B - SSSt	Bk C - LA	Bk C - SSSt
15	April	K.2.3	53%	39%	54%	46%	34%	47%
14	Cheryl	K.6.2	46%	34%	51%	43%	25%	54%
16	Dan	K.8.3	14%	69%	0%	71%	28%	43%
22	Gina	K.9.2	67%	33%	44%	41%	24%	67%
2	Katy	K.1.1	61%	14%	21%	79%	37%	36%
10	Linda	K.5.3	69%	31%	40%	49%	39%	39%
25	Sharon	K.4.1	64%	18%	46%	41%	37%	59%
17	Tracy	K.7.1	74%	17%	39%	62%	36%	35%
20	Vivian	K.3.2	70%	30%	40%	60%	12%	71%
Totals			<b>58%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>50%</b>

*First Grade Teachers*

Interview Number	Name	Code	Bk A - LA	Bk A - SSSt	Bk B - LA	Bk B - SSSt	Bk C - LA	Bk C - SSSt
1	Beth	1.1.2	31%	57%	39%	31%	14%	77%
12	Denise	1.5.1	61%	22%	15%	69%	36%	57%
9	Jessie	1.7.2	13%	86%	5%	89%	3%	92%
8	Kelly	1.3.3	30%	70%	12%	89%	38%	51%
7	Melody	1.9.3	31%	62%	13%	87%	40%	50%
23	Ms. B	1.8.1	35%	11%	50%	50%	34%	56%
3	Paige	1.2.1	71%	13%	14%	77%	40%	41%
6	Sandy	1.6.3	67%	30%	25%	75%	30%	48%
4	Tulip	1.4.2	37%	63%	5%	95%	29%	55%
Totals			<b>42%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>59%</b>

*Second Grade Teachers*

Interview Number	Name	Code	Bk A - LA	Bk A - SSSt	Bk B - LA	Bk B - SSSt	Bk C - LA	Bk C - SSSt
24	Allison	2.8.2	50%	50%	62%	35%	19%	71%
11	Anna	2.1.3	53%	43%	54%	45%	52%	29%
18	Debbie	2.3.1	69%	21%	11%	89%	78%	22%
21	Grammy	2.6.1	64%	7%	0%	100%	50%	22%
27	Jodi	2.9.1	70%	30%	30%	70%	29%	61%
5	Laura	2.2.2	23%	77%	25%	67%	8%	83%
13	Michelle	2.4.3	62%	38%	50%	50%	60%	39%
26	Monitess	2.7.3	45%	41%	38%	62%	37%	49%
19	Nancy	2.5.2	72%	28%	59%	41%	17%	70%
Totals			<b>57%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>50%</b>

**Appendix N**  
**Planning Processes Coding Scheme**

<b>Planning Procedures</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Participants</b>
<b>AUTHENTICATE</b>	Check end pages	21	19
-Facts	Evaluate authenticity	13	7
-Realism	Read about author, illustrator	49	23
-Content	Read front, back cover	35	18
	Read inside cover	12	9
	Refer to title page	17	10
	Refer to copyright	6	2
	Research prior to reading	12	9
<b>BUILD</b>	Activate prior knowledge	45	19
-Background knowledge	Brainstorming	7	4
-Understanding	Build background knowledge	100	21
	Checking comprehension	108	22
	Note academic vocabulary	42	20
	Note content vocabulary	21	11
	Picture walk	14	9
	Use pictures for meaning	106	23
	Visualize	4	2
<b>CONNECT</b>	Compare and contrast	28	14
-Content	Connect text-to-self	176	27
-Integrate	Connect text-to-text	36	16
-Reading strategies	Connect to activities would do	60	21
-Reading strategies	Finds ways to integrate	16	9
	Make inference	79	23
	Make prediction	104	24
	Refer to content curriculum	448	27
	Refer to literacy curriculum	96	25
<b>DETERMINE</b>	How will read	46	17
-Discussion	Plan discussion	263	26
-Purpose	Plan introduction to book	9	6
-Question	Plan questions would ask	116	20
	Read book beforehand	23	16
	Set purpose for reading	11	8
	Take notes	13	3
<b>EVALUATE</b>	Consider student response	101	24
-Usefulness	Evaluate images	26	13
-Informational text	Evaluate layout	9	7
	Evaluate possible misconceptions	1	1
	Evaluate text content	37	16
	Evaluate usefulness to content	35	17
	Value judgment	8	4

**Appendix O**  
**Participants' Reported Read Aloud Time in Their Classrooms**

How often?	How long each time?	Average per day	Teacher, Grade	School
Daily	10 min	10 min	Dan, K ½	Northview
Daily	5-15 min	10 min	Jessie, 1	Higher View
Daily	10 min	10 min	Grammy, 2	Eastfield
Daily but less later	5-15 min	10 min	Tulip, 1	Higher View
Daily	10-15 min	13 min	April, K	Westside
2 times daily	10-15 min	15 min	Cheryl, K ½	Lakeview
1-3 times daily	10 min	15 min	Gina, K ½	Bayside
2 times daily	5-10 min	15 min	Katy, K	Eastfield
2-3 times daily	5-10 min	15 min	Melody, 1	Clearview
Daily	15 min	15 min	Sharon, K	Rock View
2 times daily	5-10 min	15 min	Tracy, K ½	Lakeview
2-3 times daily	5-15 min	20 min	Sandy, 1	Lakeview
2 times daily	10 min	20 min	Vivian, K	Clearview
2-3 times daily	10-15 min	25 min	Denise, 1	Lakeview
2-3 times daily	10-15 min	25 min	Kelly, 1	Lakeview
2-3 times daily	10-15 min	25 min	Paige, 1	Lakeview
2-3 times daily	5-20 min	25 min	Monitess, 2	Northfield
Daily	30 min	30 min	Anna, 2	Lakeview
Daily	30 min	30 min	Debbie, 2	Ridgeview
3-4 times daily	10-15 min	38 min	Beth, 1	Hillside
3 times daily	5-20 min	38 min	Linda, K	Southside
3-5 times daily	10-15 min	50 min	Allison, 2	Greenville
1-2 times daily	20-30 min	50 min	Laura, 2,	Clearview
3 times daily	15-25 min	60 min	Jodi, 2	Riverview
3 times daily	15-25 min	60 min	Michelle, 2	Ridgeview
3 times daily	15-25 min	60 min	Nancy, 2	Ridgeview
2-4 times daily	15-30 min	67 min	Ms. B., 1	Bayside
		<b>Average 28 minutes per day</b>		

**Appendix P**  
**Time Available for Teaching Social Studies**  
**in the Primary Grade Classrooms of Participants**

<b>Time Available</b>	<b>Time Per Day</b>	<b>Grade K</b>	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
0 – No Time	0 min	3 Cheryl Gina Vivian	0	0
0 – During Reading	0 min	5 April Dan Katy Sharon Tracy	0	0
20-30 min, 3x/week alternate with science and health	6 min	1 Linda	0	0
20-30 min, 3x/week alternate with science	9 min	0	1 Beth	1 Laura
30 min/day alternate with science and health	10 min	0	5 Denise Kelly Ms. B. Paige Sandy	5 Allison Anna Debbie Jodi Michelle
30 min/day alternate with science	15 min	0	1 Melody	2 Monitess Nancy
30 min, 3x/week	18 min	0	2 Tulip Jessie	0
30 min/day	30 min	0	0	1 Grammy
<b>Average</b>	<b>9 min/day</b>			

**Appendix Q**  
**Social Studies Curriculum Topics in the Primary Grades**

School District	Community, Helpers	Friendship	State Symbols	National Symbols	Voting	Families, Long Ago	Famous People	Holidays	Pilgrims, Am Indians	Wants and Needs	Goods and Services	Cultures, Families	States, Regions	World Geography	Mapping	Mexico	Canada
	Civics			History				Econ		Geography							
<i>Bayside</i> 1-K 1-1 <sup>st</sup>	1	1	1					1	1						1		
<i>Greenville</i> 1-2 <sup>nd</sup>	2						2			2	2			2	2		
<i>Eastfield</i> 1-K 1-2 <sup>nd</sup>	2		2		2	2	2			2	2		2		2	2	
<i>Lakeview</i> 3-K, 4-1 <sup>st</sup> 1-2 <sup>nd</sup>	1		2	K		2		1		1		1 2	2		1	1	
<i>Riverview</i> 1-K 5-2 <sup>nd</sup>	2						2	K		2	2			2	2		
<i>Southside</i> 1-K	K	K						K									
<i>Westside</i> 2-K 1-1 <sup>st</sup> 1-2 <sup>nd</sup>	K 1 2					1 2				1 2					1		
<i>L-Private</i> 2-1st	1			1				1		1	1				1	1	1
<i>H-Private</i> 1-1st							1		1								

Teachers were not equally represented in each school district. The K-1-2 representing the grade levels that the topics were described. Topics listed across the top row were noted by participants; they were not confirmed with the school district.