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## **An analysis of social studies in the public elementary school: A consideration for motivation**

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California State University  
San Bernardino

AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL STUDIES  
IN THE PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:  
A CONSIDERATION FOR MOTIVATION

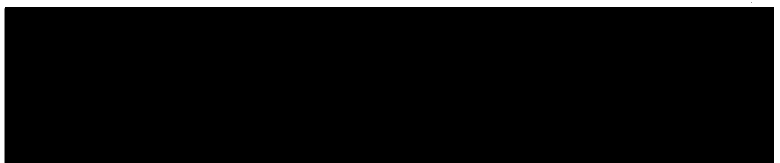
A Curriculum Development Project Submitted to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the  
Degree of

Master of Arts  
in  
Education: Elementary Option

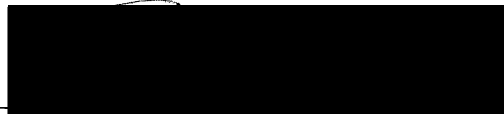
By

Heidi R. Smith, M.A.  
San Bernardino, California  
1991

APPROVED BY:



Advisor: Dr. Charles Funkhouser



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AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL STUDIES  
IN THE PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:  
A CONSIDERATION FOR MOTIVATION

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Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this project was to assess the status of motivation in elementary social studies in the public school. Motivation is the main concern for this writer. First, a questionnaire was used to assess teachers perceptions about current practices in social studies instruction. Second, after a method of motivation through the use of the computer was utilized, a questionnaire was used to assess students' perceptions of computer use as a motivational technique.

Motivation is believed to be the route by which learning takes place. If there is a lack of motivation, this writer believes that the maximum amount of learning is not taking place. Social studies is a subject that has in the past either been neglected or taught primarily through the use of the textbook. Social studies is important to the curriculum since it ties students futures to the past.

Procedure

A questionnaire was given to 200 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade public elementary teachers. Seventy-five questionnaires were returned. The results were used to assess the reasons for motivation, or lack of, as perceived by the teachers of upper elementary social studies. The results were used as a basis for futher analysis. This writer developed a computer software program for use in the fifth grade. The program was designed to supplement teacher instruction, at the same time provide motivation. A pilot was done with four fifth grade

students and two fifth grade teachers. Finally, the program was used daily in two fifth grade classrooms for two weeks. A questionnaire was given to each of the students (65 total students) to indicate the motivational value of such an instructional method, for use in elementary social studies.

### Results

The initial questionnaire provided information regarding teachers' perceptions of current status of elementary social studies. Textbooks apparently have little to do with motivation and interest. Instructional time is perceived as limited. All but one teacher felt social studies was as important as English, math, and reading. All but two felt a computer program would be helpful to motivate their students.

The pilot of the program served as a tentative model for future research. Six questions were used to assess the reliability of the program, the educational value, the appropriateness of difficulty, and the motivational value. The information was necessary to further the analysis of students' perceptions. The questionnaire given to the two classes of fifth grade students indicated the computer program had the ability to increase knowledge and motivation in social studies.

### Conclusions and Implications

This writer found that other educators felt similar about the perceived deficiencies in elementary social studies. Motivation is a concern for teachers and students. Like the textbook, the computer can be used as one method of motivating students, however, it should not become a primary instructional tool. Several methods should be used in varying activities to achieve the greatest interest in a subject that is becoming more and more recognized as one of the most important subjects in the daily curriculum.

This project is dedicated to:

My parents, John and Gay Smith,  
for their encouragement and financial support  
during my full time study in the Master of Arts program

and

Scott Coffin,  
for his resourcefulness and support  
most necessary for the completion of the program.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The area of concern involves the subject of social studies in the public elementary schools. It has been this writer's experience that social studies has been the least interesting and disliked subject for students and has, in the past, been wholly underrepresented in the classroom. Only recently there have been growing gains in the area of social studies education, especially with the use of the whole language approach. Anne Martin, a proponent of whole language, conducted a case study in her kindergarten class to validate her belief that making social studies less formal and less "basalized", causes greater in-depth understanding and greater motivation for her and her students. With more studies being conducted in the field of social studies, she hopes that educators will no longer describe the field as "being in a state of confusion, as being uncertain in purpose, schizophrenic in definition, panoramic in scope, and unpredictable in product" (Martin, 1990). Rationale for why educators might find social studies deficient, or lacking in motivation, include for the purpose of this study:

1. lack of teacher enthusiasm
2. lack of motivational activities in textbooks
3. instruction consists of dry, monotonous lecture
4. subject may be believed to be less important than English, math, and reading
5. lack of time

First, if social studies is perceived as an uninteresting topic of study, as concluded by a review of the literature, then one method of motivating students might be through the use of the computer. Procedures in curriculum development, therefore, have been set forth to study the effects of a computer software program developed by this writer. The program is designed to 1) motivate students in social studies, 2) supplement traditional classroom instruction, and 3) implement the History-Social Science Framework in an

approach that meets the needs of teachers and students. (Copy of computer program "Coast to Coast" available upon request).

A long term study of computer-assisted instruction (hereafter referred to as CAI) conducted by the Educational Testing Service (hereafter referred to as ETS) found that computers do assist learning (White, 1986). Pupils learned more quickly when they were exposed to CAI than they did in traditional classroom instruction. The CAI included a good deal of drill and practice, which is the form most of the early software has taken. And drill and practice, according to the ETS study, is effective, partly because it improves motivation and attention. A pilot study in the Electronic Learning Laboratory at Teachers College showed that student attention, defined as time-on-task, was higher with computers than it was in the classroom (White, 1986). This study also found that pupils involved with the computer ask more questions than they do in the traditional classroom. This goes against the notion that children just sit in front of the computer like little robots. This writer suggests that the goal should not be to substitute teacher methodology, but to supplement it with a motivational tool.

District and school administration and teachers are now responsible for carefully studying the guidelines and assessing: 1) the status of current curriculum; and 2) the capacity of existing textbooks and instructional materials to address the new framework. The History-Social Science Framework (1988) provides guidelines for assessment and planning stages. Social studies should be articulated throughout the grades and across disciplines. Planning is followed by curriculum implementation, which includes selection of textbooks, supporting literature and primary sources, and other instructional materials, and continuing staff development and ongoing evaluation. Through a program of this nature, social science would hopefully allow for more instructional time and provide more opportunity for in-depth studies. The importance of history-social science content would, therefore, become most evident. Making a subject interesting is much easier for the educator who finds importance in the subject.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review will focus on educators' perceptions of social studies. A step by step procedure will be followed in order to address the rationale as indicated by 1 - 5 in the Introduction. The review begins with a general concern for education and the important role of social studies. The perceived decline in education places textbooks at the center of the debate, however, lack of time and the importance of social studies by districts are addressed as well. An editor of textbooks shares his concerns and suggests that changes are taking place in the textbook industry based on changes taking place in education. Two periods of history are compared in a research study to find out what changes have taken place in educational textbooks. Several viewpoints are discussed in relation to perceived deficiencies and solutions that might be addressed in the future. Finally, information about teachers' perceptions in kindergarten social studies bring our focus back to the concern for the quality of education.

According to Pamela Joseph (1986), families in the United States have changed quite drastically since the 1950's. Few children will live in the same house, in the same town, with two "natural" parents and a mother who does not work outside the home. As this is compared to the "Ozzie and Harriet" type family, concerns for education hold that version of family against the model of today. For the children, "failing to teach about the family in all its forms is an opportunity lost" to provide insight about the social institutions that most closely affect them, and for sharing experiences and expressing concerns (Joseph, 1986).

Joseph (1986) states that "no longer can teachers hope that encountering a child who suffers from stress and depression will be an occasional or isolated happening." Instead of trying to make it "all well" for the child, teachers have other responsibilities. For example, teachers must become aware of their own attitudes, particularly about divorce. Joseph argues that the classroom can provide a warm family-like atmosphere, and the teacher can express willingness

to help by allowing the child to express feelings and requesting parent conferences.

The role for social studies can be seen as very important. Literature helps to explore problems and to identify situations of others, however, it also tends to end with a solution that may not be realistic. Social studies offers opportunities to study families and childhood in a way literature cannot. It provides a "forum for discussion grounded in reality" (Joseph, 1986). Joseph further suggests that social studies can also provide a catharsis of releasing pent-up emotions while sharing similar feelings. Many social studies curricula contain information about community workers who can help children. Material about children's rights give valuable information whose parents might be fighting for custody. In addition, the class might study about a family as a social institution and include discussions about the purpose of family, roles of the individuals, and most important, that there is no normal model of family. Seeing the family in a historical point of view, too, might help students to understand the changes that have taken place.

In 1983, the publication of "A Nation at Risk," by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, placed textbooks at the center of the debate over the causes and cures of the perceived decline in education. Research has shown that as much as ninety percent of classroom instructional time is structured by materials such as textbooks (Woodward, Elliot, Carter, and Nagel, 1986). The argument has been that the typical elementary teacher cannot put together the necessary supplementary materials because of inadequate preparation time, the emphasis by districts on basic skill instruction in math and reading, and the daily demands of the classroom. It has been further argued that given these factors, textbook programs can at least represent a basic resource to ensure that students get reasonably good quality skills instruction that meet most curriculum goals in most districts.

Research by Woodward et al. (1986) have shown that while the technical quality of social studies textbooks is high, other important aspects of these materials, such as content, presentation, and scope and sequence are open to criticism. They also conclude that social studies cannot be taught through textbooks alone. One of the problems identified is that the coverage of

material is so disconnected that students find it difficult to understand the depth of the issues and their relevance to society today.

From the viewpoint of an author-editor, A. Graham (1986) argues that for a time, publishers had to simplify their books in order to sell them. School districts required publishers to determine reading levels by measuring the length of sentences and the number of unfamiliar words. This meant shortening sentences, cutting out connectives and simplifying vocabulary. The result in the process was a loss of clarity and meaning. Graham states that recently a national concern for excellence has resulted in further enrichment of content, increased challenge, greater difficulty, more in-depth treatment of subject matter and greater emphasis on higher level thinking skills. Another area of change, Graham identifies, is the greater involvement of classroom teachers in textbook selection and the increase in community interest. He says that standardization itself has led to textbook improvements. The more curricula a textbook can fit, the larger the market and the higher the potential sales. The greater the opportunity for sales, the more money the publisher can invest in developing books. Therefore, if publishers can spend more, the quality of their books are improved. However, as customers' expectations increase and the publishers' costs increase, many publishers are having to drop out of the competition (Graham, 1986).

Gregory Birchell and Bob Taylor (1986) conducted an analysis of selected basal elementary social studies textbook series to determine if the "back-to-basics" movement had caused a change toward more conventional content in elementary social studies, basal textbook series. This would indicate if there had been a shift in the elementary social studies curriculum. They assert, "the 'back-to-basics' movement of the late 1970's and early 1980's ran counter to the New Social Studies, which preceded it" (Birchell and Taylor, 1986). The two researchers determined that while the New Social Studies was structured around social science concepts, generalizations, and methodologies, the "back-to-basics" proponents placed an emphasis on five areas: reading and skill development; American history, heritage and tradition; geography, map and globe skills; American government, civics and citizenship; and inculcation of traditional values, attitudes, and beliefs.

Using the five areas for evaluative criteria, eight widely used elementary basal textbook series (96 books) were analyzed. They found that during the 1979-82 period, greater importance was placed on reading skill development; greater stress was placed on the study of American history, heritage, and tradition; greater emphasis was placed on the study of geography and map and globe skills; greater emphasis was placed on the study of American government, civics, and citizenship; greater importance was placed on the inculcation of traditional values, attitudes, and beliefs; the texts had been simplified with respect to vocabulary, sentence strength, and number of concepts treated in order to reduce the readability levels of the books; practices of the New Social Studies had been de-emphasized, greater emphasis was placed on all skill development, in particular, reading skills, map and globe skills and study skills; and testing materials and emphasizing factual recall were found to be more prevalent. The impact of the "back-to-basics" movement was not reflected equally across the series offered by publishers during the 1969-72 and 1979-82 periods. Basal text materials did not match closely with the context offered or the methods suggested in the texts during both periods.

Jean Hutt, chairperson of the Social Studies Curriculum Revision Committee at Saline High School, Saline, Michigan says, "The area of social studies in elementary education has always seemed to me an amorphous one. Others apparently share this view" (Hutt, 1985). Hutt was involved in a revision of the elementary curriculum when it became evident that recommended time allotments for social studies were extremely low. Allotted time for social studies, in minutes, was lower or equal to the separate subjects of reading, writing, spelling, listening, math, science, and total time of art, physical education, and vocal music.

Presented with a document developed by the elementary principals and the district superintendent entitled, "Proposal D: Recommendations for District Adoption of an Elementary Curriculum", Hutt (1985) had approximately two weeks to prepare a defense for social studies. Based on the 1979-80 educational goals related to social studies, and related reports from the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), Hutt developed a counter-argument for increased time allotments for social studies instruction.

Hutt began by stating her purpose and giving a definition of social studies... "a combination of disciplines that encompass a variety of essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Hutt, 1985). She went on to display the fourteen goals related to social studies and reflected on the concern for the human condition as it related to our Constitution. She concluded her presentation by indicating that skills involved in social studies included reading, writing, outlining, and spelling (which were equal in allotted time to social studies). Her recommendation to balance the overall curriculum, therefore, involved taking time away from the other areas and adding it to social studies instruction.

Proposal D initially resulted in increased instruction time for social studies. Fifty to seventy-five minutes from kindergarten to first grade. This number remained consistent until the 5th grade level, which increased 40% to a count of 125 minutes. While other categories increased, decreased, or remained consistent to progressive grade levels, social studies increased only a small percentage in relation to its importance to the total educational curriculum.

At the conclusion of the presentation, the board ultimately called a special session to add 50 minutes to fourth, fifth, and sixth grade social studies instructional time. The allotted time for fourth grade social studies was changed from 75 to 125 minutes, and the time for fifth and sixth grade went from 125 to 175 minutes. Therefore, important social studies skills would not have to be neglected because of shortage of time (Hutt, 1985).

Anne Martin shares Jean Hutt's concern for social studies. Her defense, however, includes her belief that social studies should not consist of "ready-made curriculum units," but that children's experience can be the social studies (Martin, 1990). Martin provides day-to-day documentation and a class journal in order to meet her needs. This is not through formal evaluation or comparative measures of achievement-- but through a focus on children's ways of thinking and interests of individual children as well as the whole class.

In the three months, the children participated with intense interest in high-level problem solving discussions. In addition, the children confronted the social issues of "inclusion versus exclusion, rights of individuals within a group, privacy versus public disclosure, and personal responsibility toward others"

(Martin, 1990). The club drew the children together and also drew the parents together. Martin not only gained a greater in-depth understanding of her students, but also gained insight as to the motivation inherent in what educators have termed "social studies". In her opinion, the teachers' greatest role is facilitating and establishing a classroom atmosphere where "contributions are valued" and "sympathetic interest in other people underlies all classroom activities" (Martin, 1990).

Virginia Atwood and Judith Finkelstein (1988) state, "Much evidence supports the importance of teaching social studies concepts in the early years if the aims of education are to be accomplished," however, results of several surveys of the status of social studies imply that social studies is struggling for survival in the early grades. Because none of those studies provided specific information concerning social studies in kindergarten for Atwood and Finkelstein, they began a study to provide information about the status of kindergarten social studies and kindergarten teachers' perceptions about social studies. The researchers hoped the results would serve as "baseline data" for concerns about the quality of education.

A questionnaire was used to determine the level of emphasis teachers placed on specific social studies topics, skills, values, and the amount of time devoted to social studies. The sample was randomly selected from a list of all kindergarten teachers throughout the states of Iowa and Kentucky. These states are similar in rural population and representative of general and current practice as of March 1988. Forty-eight percent of the Kentucky teachers and 50 percent of the Iowa teachers responded to the questionnaires. Districts varied in size from 34 to 93,000 students, with the mean student population from both states equal to 6,721.

Approximately 20 percent of the teachers indicated that social studies was taught "as the opportunity arises." Social development was considered social studies by many of the teachers. In both states, district and state mandates appeared to have little influence on kindergarten social studies programs. Affective concerns such as socialization, positive self-concept, acceptance of differences among people, and development of personal qualities were highly stressed in the curricula, while technical skills were not highly valued. Teachers

consistently ranked topics as more important than their emphasis on teaching them.

Barriers perceived as taking time away from social studies instruction included "higher priority of other curricular areas," "lack of appropriate materials," "lack of clear curriculum guidelines," and "lack of teacher interest." Social studies textbooks seemed to have little impact in kindergarten curricula. The teacher provided the major source of units, lessons, and activities. Most frequently used were picture study, the school library, role play, learning centers, puppetry, and worksheets.

School district size apparently had little relationship to the amount of time spent on social studies, except that teachers in larger districts were significantly more likely to perceive low parental expectations, management, and discipline problems as reasons for not teaching social studies. In addition, the survey results indicated that teachers in larger districts tended to use dittoed worksheets more often. They were also more likely to teach respect for others than teachers in smaller districts.

According to Atwood and Finkelstein (1988), an "insignificant number" of teachers in both groups had a separate time block for social studies instruction. They further argue that the average 22.6 minutes that is spent on social studies instruction must be viewed as integration into other curriculum areas, rather than a specific time block. Atwood and Finkelstein believe that this technique is viewed as being more consistent with the developmental needs and learning styles of young children. Unfortunately, however, the data indicates that as teachers gain experience, they place less emphasis on teaching social studies.

Social studies has often been viewed as a subject primarily based on history and has, therefore, been limited in scope. The time allotments Jean Hutt found in her district reflect this limited scope and as a separate subject was allowed the same or less time than reading, writing, and spelling. If reading, writing, and spelling become language arts in a whole language experience, then the social studies skills, including critical thinking, can be developed to full potential in a balanced curriculum. If educators realize the responsibility to preserve social studies education, budget cuts and emphasis on reading, science, and math can no longer make social studies an endangered subject area. Perceived

rationale, numbers 4 and 5 in the introduction, do not exist in a balanced curriculum.

According to Birchell and Taylor (1986), society has moved toward a more conservative political position, and the recent elementary social studies textbooks have reflected the change. They argue that the "back-to-basics" movement was only one of the number of societal forces acting upon the curriculum in this period. While publishers did not completely eliminate the New Social Studies from elementary social studies textbooks, the "back-to-basics" movement had an influence on what was being emphasized.

Since 1982, this writer believes society has expanded their view of what is important. "Back-to-basics" might infer formalized instruction, however, the "basics" now include critical thinking, integration with the humanities and social sciences, and learning democratic values, among other Framework goals. The current societal shift may be incorporating the New Social Studies' emphasis on social science concepts, generalizations, and methodologies, using inquiry teaching strategies, and the "Back-to-Basics" emphasis on the five skill areas. In addition, the current period may also be including a shift away from textbook instruction as a primary resource.

Social studies, as separate from socialization, may not seem as important at the kindergarten level, however, the review of the literature provides information to suggest that much can be done to broaden the scope of what social studies is. What it is not is a ready-made package from which students learn fragments of history. The teacher becomes more of a discussion facilitator, interviewer, and listener. Intense involvement of kindergartners in social studies can be a model for which all elementary students can benefit. Rationale, numbers 2 and 3 stated in the Introduction, could then be eliminated.

This writer believes that when authentic assessment (assessment based on what the child actually knows and interpreted by the teacher who taught the subject matter) plays a greater role in education, especially in social studies, Anne Martin's alternatives to the formalized social studies lessons will have a greater chance of becoming a reality. Integrating social studies with other subjects, utilizing spontaneous social inquiry, and teaching through experiential understanding, are still in transition as the new History-Social Science



Framework (adopted in July 1987) sets the standards of the elementary social studies classroom. Most importantly, teacher enthusiasm (rationale number 1 in the Introduction) would likely be improved with the changes stated above.

## CHAPTER III

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

#### Goal

Based on a review of current literature, this writer suggests a need for a curricular consideration of motivation in the area of elementary social studies.

#### Objectives

1. Teachers should become aware of their own current practices in the area of social studies education.
2. Teachers should be aware of their abilities to choose from a variety of methods of instruction to meet the needs of their students.
3. Students should be provided with motivating learning experiences in social studies in order to address the goals of the Framework.

## CHAPTER IV

### DESIGN

A review of the literature suggests that educators are concerned for social studies education and that several changes are taking place to overcome the perceived deficiencies. One way to make personal changes is to become aware of one's own practices. Self evaluation, student evaluations, and peer evaluations might be methods of assessing one's own deficiencies. The History-Social Science Framework should also provide a foundation for which one would implement a motivational social studies program. A perceived need for motivational techniques is indicated by the review of the literature. Techniques discussed included the following: providing supplemental instruction to the text, providing relevancy for the students through personal experience, and balancing the curriculum so the coverage of material does not appear disconnected and irrelevant.

This writer suggests an additional method for motivation: computer-assisted instruction, as established in the Introduction. The computer program developed by this writer has been designed for fifth grade-- a study of the United States. The topic and grade level are irrelevant, yet the point is to be made that the program could benefit all grade levels if the following characteristics were integrated into the design as they have with this program. The characteristics have in common the development of motivation.

The program, titled "Coast to Coast," symbolizes and illustrates a "learning adventure" in United States History. The players are considered voyagers, as they embark on an adventure of answering history questions for points. Motivation would come from the extrinsic and intrinsic rewards of this program. The most points are given when the answer is correct the first time; half the points are given if the answer is correct the second time; if the question is not answered correctly the second time, the answer is given and there are no points awarded. Additionally, the program has the intrinsic ability to provide the opportunity for students to feel good about knowing the answers each

additional time the adventure is taken and perhaps by knowing the information that his/her playing partners do not know.

Because of the nature of the computer, learning is primarily at the memory and explanatory understanding levels (Bigge, 1982). In explanatory understanding, the learning is computer-centered and the teaching seeks to familiarize students with the relationships between generalization and solitary facts. This type of teaching is not something that can be hurried. The program promotes self-paced learning, the objectives are stated clearly, the role of practice is made important, and the questions co-exist with teacher lecture, discussion, and text material. According to Morris Bigge (1982), academic learning time is important; increasing the time a student spends engaged in instructional activities will result in more learning.

This program might also contain within it, exploratory understanding. For example, insight might be achieved by eliminating wrong answers or by judging which answer would be most correct given certain descriptions, details, or important clues. Two students might come up with the right answer using two different methods. For example, one might use other resources to find the answer, or use past knowledge to make an educated guess, while another might come to the conclusion that they have a 50% chance of getting the correct answer before they are given the answer. In any case, the student must use intelligent processes based on individual learning styles and higher level thinking skills, before answering the question. By breaking what might first appear to be a broad topic into smaller more interesting parts, the students may find success in recognizing the right answer among multiple choices.

The program is made personal and interesting by updating students' scores, through personalized language, as opposed to computer jargon or highly intellectual vocabulary, and by providing supplemental information (not always information to be tested later). In addition, three levels of difficulty are designed to meet the students' individual academic needs.

There is an affective consideration too; attitudes of participants in an activity are important to success (Bigge, 1982). It is this writer's opinion that learning can be an enjoyable experience. This is an opportunity provided for

the students to enjoy learning, learn relevant social studies topics, and also supplement the formal instruction.

### Pilot of the Program

A pilot was necessary to obtain information about the reliability of the program (consistent programming, no functional errors), the educational value, the appropriate difficulty for the age group, and the motivational value. Six questions, not asked in any particular order, were used to assess the above criteria:

1. Did you find the program educational?
2. Did you understand how to use the program?
3. Were the questions challenging?
4. Do you feel this program was organized to fit your needs?
5. Would you use the program again?

Four fifth grade students and two fifth grade teachers were randomly chosen as respondents for the pilot. No preference was made to race, sex, socioeconomic status, academic ability, nor prior knowledge of computers. The respondents were selected for the purpose of gaining insight from the two perspectives of learning and teaching. The respondents were grouped into two's. The teachers were grouped together. On three consecutive days, each group used the program from point of explanation to the point of completion of all three difficulty levels. This took approximately 45 minutes to one hour. If the Apple Macintosh computer had not been used previously, part of the explanation was used to describe the function of the "mouse", which is essential to use the program. At the completion of the program, the five questions were asked informally. All respondents answered yes to all five questions with some informal feedback in favor of the motivational value of the program.

## Procedure

In order to test the usefulness of such a program, this writer felt a questionnaire (APPENDIX A) would be necessary to gain insights from teachers current perceptions of social studies education, and also, the students' responses to the computer program after they had an opportunity to use it in their classroom. It was important to keep the responses anonymous so the results would be accurate and the respondents' reputabilities were not impaired. Results are made available upon request.

Two hundred total questionnaires were distributed among upper elementary teachers (grades 4-6) in the following school districts-- San Bernardino City, Redlands, and Morongo Unified (January 1990). Upper elementary was the focus of this study for two reasons. First, the program, designed for fifth grade, takes into consideration the academic levels of fourth through sixth grade (for example, reading ability, logic skills, memory ability, and concept understanding). Second, it is viewed that primary and secondary instructional methods might be too dissimilar to group together in one study. The districts are not chosen to represent southern California schools, although they do represent a small population of the San Bernardino County schools. The questionnaire does not provide information based on race, sex, or I.Q. An analysis of the results provided information about current practices in upper elementary classrooms, the perceived importance of social studies instruction, and methods of instruction and their perceived levels of motivation. A total of seventy-five questionnaires were returned. The results are given in Table 1.

An analysis of the results would suggest that social studies is one of the teachers' favorite subjects, and therefore it becomes interesting for their students. Textbooks apparently have little to do with motivation and interest in the subject and time is perceived as limited. Most teachers feel social studies is important and that more should be done to motivate their students. The subjectivity of social studies is not a perceived problem. And finally, almost seventy-five percent of the teachers felt a computer program would be helpful to motivate their students.

Table 1

Questionnaire results of teacher perceptions


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Question (description)	SD	D	N	A	SA
1 (Sts. most interesting subj.)	3	15	17	31	9
2 (Tchr.'s favorite subj.)	1	5	13	28	28
3 (Textbooks uninteresting)	2	13	18	24	18
4 (Not enough time)	5	18	9	30	13
5 (Do more to motivate)	2	5	16	26	26
6 (Not an important subj.)	19	22	20	10	4
7 (Subj. time cut down)	8	21	14	24	8
8 (Not comfortable with subj.)	35	30	8	0	2
9 (Want sts. to like subj.)	0	0	8	38	29
10 (Computer program help)	1	3	17	31	23

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Note. SD = Strongly Disagree; A = Agree; N = Neither agree nor disagree; D = Disagree; SA = Strongly Agree

Next, the program was used in two fifth grade classes at the same school in the Redlands Unified School District. After two weeks, when each student had at least a half hour total time on the computer, a questionnaire (APPENDIX B) was given to each student (65 total). The results are given in Table 2.

An analysis of the results would suggest that the computer is a motivating tool and does have the capabilities of making social studies interesting. One possible reason why question three was so closely divided between Disagree and Agree is that the computer might be perceived as only one of many methods of motivating students. If the computer were the only method used, it too would have the potential of becoming uninteresting and monotonous.

Table 2

Questionnaire of students' responses to CAI


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Question (description)	SD	D	N	A	SA
1 (Enjoy using computer)	0	1	1	45	18
2 (Understand how to answer questions)	2	10	5	28	20
3 (Subj. more interesting)	7	20	10	22	6
4 (Comfortable)	1	3	0	3	58
5 (Learn new facts)	6	7	6	25	21
6 (Have fun)	0	1	0	47	17
7 (Use computer again)	0	2	0	25	38
8 (Remember facts)	0	0	14	41	10
9 (Making decisions)	3	0	4	10	48
10 (More intersting than textbook)	0	2	0	8	55

---

Note. SD = Strongly Disagree; A = Agree; N = Neither agree nor disagree; D = Disagree; SA = Strongly Agree

### Limitations of Study

The results of this study cannot be generalized to the larger population of upper elementary students and teachers with such a small sample. Even a small population of the San Bernardino County schools is entirely too small. San Bernardino County contains one of the largest student populations in Southern California. The three districts used in the study will not be compared to each other, but included together to suggest a combined consensus. The results and the course of study would be notably different in a comparison study. Perhaps more knowledge would be gained if the study were to include a comparison of teachers' perceptions or students' motivation through the use of the computer.



The students' use of the computer may cause a Halo or Hawthorne effect if students do not already use the Apple Macintosh computer regularly. For example, motivation for the computer might be confused with motivation for social studies. Therefore, what might be perceived as motivation for social studies would last only as long as the computer was in use. The novelty of computers might create a motivation that might not otherwise be present. The effects may be lessened by the fact that computers are virtually a reality in every classroom, or at least at every school site in a lab setting. However, according to the Apple Educational Technology Planning Guide (Apple Computer Inc., 1987), the Apple Macintosh is notably different in function when compared with the Apple IIe's, IIc's, and II+'s that are most prevalent in the elementary school setting. In addition, students' individual knowledge, or lack of knowledge, of computers may have an effect on their knowledge of social studies gained by the program.

## CHAPTER V

### IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

If the objectives of this writer are to be met, an effort must be made among educators to realize the importance of social studies. Every class has a unique set of values, which the teacher must be aware of. Social studies can be a very personal, nonobjective subject, unlike many other subjects in the core curriculum. With so many resources at our fingertips, why limit ourselves to one method of instruction? Textbooks might be used as a basis for which we gain information or provide questions about the accuracy of the material. From there, lessons might involve research of primary sources, roundtable discussions, students' experiences, guest speakers, field trips, and social studies through literature. For the sake of motivating students, social studies must be made relevant and interesting.

By balancing the curriculum, social studies does not have to be squeezed into the daily routine. There is no better reason for learning the English language than to reach an understanding about one's own culture and about appreciation of others'. Mathematics concepts can easily be translated into distances, timelines, and real people. For example, measurement of distance might include a geography lesson on where relatives live, ancestor origins, or a simulation of a trip somewhere of interest. A timeline of history might make a lesson on addition or subtraction come alive. Real people, too, could reinforce a social studies lesson as well as make a mathematics lesson meaningful.

With the development of microcomputer systems, inexpensive computing power is available to elementary schools. Consequently, microcomputers can now be used for many useful and creative activities in social studies, such as to teach and reinforce new concepts, to relieve teachers of a variety of time-consuming chores, and to motivate students to produce creative projects. Frances B. Cacha, an associate professor of education at New York College/CUNY in Jamaica, New York, finds the four different modes of CAI, as set forth by the Minnesota Educational Computing Consortium (MECC), to be useful (Cacha, 1985). The four modes are: 1) tutorial, 2) drill and practice,

3) problem solving, and 4) simulation. Cacha encourages teachers and students "to explore the many capabilities of the microcomputer for use in the elementary social studies program."

Teacher enthusiasm is more likely to be improved if their students find interest in the subject. Similarly, students will find interest in social studies if the teacher is enthusiastic. The relationship is co-dependent. One way for the teacher to initiate a level of motivation is to become aware of one's current practices in social studies. Teachers should be aware that a variety of methods are available and that the History-Social Science Framework does provide a basis for the curriculum.

This writer wishes to initiate a thoughtful social studies program. She does not wish to provide the answer to success. Questions such as those posed here should be answered individually by each teacher of social studies. Perhaps we need to ask more questions of our students as well, instead of simply providing the answers for them. Isn't that the goal of education-- to have students grow up as thinking and self-sufficient adults bound by a common thread of knowledge and societal appreciation? Isn't this, too, what social studies is all about?

## CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSION

Deficiencies are perceived in the area of social studies education. The results of this project indicated that there is a concern for the subject. The review of the literature helped clarify the deficiencies and provided alternative and motivational methods of instruction. This writer suggested that the computer might be used as a motivational tool, but not as a primary method of instruction. The results of the questionnaires given to the two fifth grade classes were not used as part of a formal research study, but as encouragement for consideration of motivation. To meet the goal of consideration, this writer set forth several necessary objectives. Teachers should first become aware of their own methodologies. Next, social studies education should involve a variety of methods to be explored to meet the needs of individual classes. The History-Social Science Framework should be used as a resource for teachers. The process of questioning ourselves and our students is necessary so the importance of social studies can be justified. The deficiencies can then be dealt with to provide a meaningful program for our students.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
Questionnaire of Teacher Perceptions

## APPENDIX A

# QUESTIONNAIRE

Please read each item carefully, then mark the appropriate box.  
Use the legend below as a reference.

	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. Social studies is one of the most interesting subjects for my students.					
2. Social studies is one of my favorite subjects to teach.					
3. Social studies textbooks are uninteresting and provide little motivation for my students.					
4. There never seems to be enough time for adequate instruction in social studies.					
5. I would like to do much more than I am doing to motivate my students in social studies.					
6. Social studies is not as important as English, math, or reading, therefore, I spend more instructional time with those subjects.					
7. My instructional time for social studies is cut down because it is shared with another subject such as science, health, or physical education.					
8. I don't really feel comfortable with teaching social studies because of the subjectivity of the topics.					
9. I would like my students to like social studies as much or more than I do.					
10. A computer program that supplements the curriculum would be helpful to motivate my students.					

Additional Comments, Concerns, or Explanations:

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### LEGEND

- SD = Strongly Disagree
- D = Disagree
- N = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- A = Agree
- SA = Strongly Agree

## APPENDIX B

### Questionnaire of Students' Responses to CAI



## APPENDIX B

# QUESTIONNAIRE

Please read each item carefully, then mark the appropriate box.  
Use the legend below as a reference.

	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. I enjoy using a computer to learn about geography and history.					
2. I understand how to answer questions when using the computer.					
3. Social studies is more interesting when I use the computer.					
4. I feel comfortable using the computer to learn social studies.					
5. I learn new facts about social studies when I use the computer.					
6. I have fun using the computer while learning about social studies.					
7. I would like to use the computer again to learn more about social studies.					
8. I can remember facts about social studies when I use the computer.					
9. I am learning to make decisions when I use the computer to learn social studies.					
10. Social studies on the computer is sometimes more interesting than learning from a textbook.					

Additional Comments, Concerns, or Explanations:

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### LEGEND

- SD = Strongly Disagree
- D = Disagree
- N = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- A = Agree
- SA = Strongly Agree

## APPENDIX C

### Definition of Terms

## APPENDIX C

## Definition of Terms

Social Science-- disciplines which include: economics, geography, history, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and political science

Social Studies-- the study of the social sciences

History-Social Science Framework-- represents a consensus on history-social science education among those who prepared the document: teachers, curriculum specialists, administrators, and faculty from institutions of higher education

## Curriculum Course Descriptions--

Kindergarten: "Learning and Working Now and Long Ago"

Grade One: "A Child's Place in Time and Space"

Grade Two: "People Who Make a Difference"

Grade Three: "Continuity and Change"

Grade Four: "California: A Changing State"

Grade Five: "United States History and Geography: Making a New Nation"

Grade Six: "World History and Geography: Ancient Civilizations"

APPENDIX D  
Supplementary Sources

## APPENDIX D

## Supplementary Sources

Recommended Readings in Literature K-8

California State Department of Education  
Bill Honig, Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Sacramento

D.O.K. Publishers

P.O. Box 605  
East Aurora, NY 14052

Technology in the Curriculum

History-Social Science Resource Guide  
California State Department of Education

Scholastic Software Catalog K-12

P.O. Box 7502  
2931 East McCarty Street  
Jefferson City, MO 65102

QUEUE Inc.

562 Boston Ave.  
Bridgeport, CT 06610

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