

FROM TEACHER TO PEDAGOGUE: A  
QUALITATIVE STUDY OF GOOD  
MIDDLE LEVEL SOCIAL  
STUDIES EDUCATORS  
IN OKLAHOMA

By

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The school bell clamors loudly and almost instantly the halls are filled with a flurry of activity and loud din as the students pour into the halls to change classes. The smells of the middle school are distinct: a combination of watermelon or grape bubble gum, hair spray, and stale gym clothes; it is interesting to observe the different activities that take place in the short transition span. Locker doors slam shut, books are dropped on the floor only to be kicked by another student who has his head in the clouds, oblivious to anything except a girl he is trying to impress. Loud shouts of happiness or discontent echo through the halls and continues until seconds before the tardy bell rings. Such activity occurs daily in our nation's middle level schools during any five to seven minute class change.

Mrs. Elm, a seventh grade geography teacher, sits at her desk while the class change takes place. She keeps her head down and continues to read a magazine that is on her desk. The students are loud as they enter the classroom, and Mrs. Elm does what she can to keep discipline from her desk "post" as she tells the students to sit down, get out their geography books and if they are quiet they will not have homework that night. Instantly the noise starts again as spit balls and other air-bound obstacles sail across the room; utter chaos develops in spite of the teacher's constant yelling, "You better get in your seats and get to work or you'll have homework tonight." The students continue their cacophony in the room that is reflective

of the teacher. The bulletin boards are bare, the only decoration being the faded instructions for fire and disaster drills that are stapled to the boards. The chalkboards are covered with chalk dust and writing, not objectives or assignments, but student graffiti, such as, "I love Bobby," "Class of 2000 Rulz," and "Johnny is a DORK!" Students who are faintly interested in learning are frustrated, and they soon discontinue their work. Finally Mrs. Elm, in a fit of anger, distributes a worksheet for the students to work on and says it is due at the end of the hour. Some students get busy while the rest continue with their socialization, and Mrs. Elm returns to her desk and resumes reading her magazine. It is apparent Mrs. Elm is just putting in her time, drawing her paycheck, and counting the days until she can retire in two years.

Down the hall Coach Oak walks into his sixth grade medieval history class and calls for silence. The students get quiet, but some whispering and giggling is heard in the back of the room as the coach takes roll. The usual moans and groans are audible as Coach tells the students they will be studying chapter five in the text today. The students get out their books and begin reading, or pretend to read. After about twenty minutes, students start asking, "What do we do when we finish reading?" Coach tells them they are to do the review questions on page 45 and the vocabulary on page 46. Coach sits at his desk looking over some charts on a clip board; every once in a while students will raise their hands and Coach will walk over and help them. The bulletin boards are decorated with colored borders

and pre-cut social studies decorations, the same ones that have been used year after year. Maps of ancient civilizations are hung on some of the bulletin boards and one can see some effort has been made to make the room conducive to learning. Some of the "jocks" come up and visit with Coach about last night's game; they visit for a while then coach tells them they better get back to work. During the last five minutes of class, Coach discusses the material that the students have read, quickly firing basic knowledge questions to the students. Finally the bell rings, and the kids run out of the room as a new group prepares to enter.

Further down the hall Mrs. Pecan personally greets each of her eighth grade students as they enter the classroom. Students enter the room and visit for a few seconds, then go to their seats. They get out their materials for the class and look at the day's objectives and activities that are written on the chalkboard. Mrs. Pecan enters the room as soon as the tardy bell rings, visually takes roll, then begins the lesson. Mrs. Pecan throws out an idea that relates to the Constitution, and the class gets into a lively discussion for about twenty minutes; many hands go up, and everyone is eager to contribute to the discussion. After the discussion, the students get into their cooperative learning groups and work on comparing and contrasting the U.S. Constitution with the constitutions of other countries. Each group has a different constitution that they are working on, and each person in the group has an active, defined role. It is a noisy room, and the students and teacher are having fun; but

the noise is constructive noise and there's an excitement as the students learn and discover new things. Every space of the room is used, and it is obvious that the room is decorated by the students, as student work is displayed throughout the room and the bulletin boards reflect that students have been involved in creating them. All around the room are various quotes and sayings, and students enjoy being in this room. Projects of various stages are scattered throughout the room. Mrs. Pecan goes around the room and spends time with each group answering questions if necessary. During the last ten minutes of class, Mrs. Pecan gets the class's attention and begins asking questions about what they have discovered in the day's activity. The questions range from lower level knowledge questions to higher level synthesis questions. Students are free to express themselves, and they are encouraged to THINK! There is a good rapport between the teacher and the students in this caring learning environment. One can see that the teacher loves each and every child in the room, and she is having a good time with her students. This classroom is definitely one where learning takes place.

What are the differences between the poor or incompetent, average or typical, and good or effective middle level social studies teachers? What are the characteristics of these good or effective middle level social studies teachers? The purpose of this study is to look at these teachers and gain insight into the world of those middle level social studies teachers who bring so much into the lives of the

children they teach. For this study the poor or incompetent teacher is defined as one who is inept, either in subject matter, grade level, classroom management, or teaching methodology; the average or typical teacher is defined as one who gets the job done, is competent, but does not go beyond his/her assigned duties. The good or effective teacher is defined as a pedagogue who is competent and knows the craft of teaching, values his/her students and the effects s/he has on them, expects a lot from students, is caring, loving and has the ability to make learning an enjoyable process. This teacher goes far beyond the boundaries of the job description. Good and effective will be used interchangeably throughout the paper.

This research investigates the literature on the middle level characteristics, philosophy, and psychology; the literature on social studies education research; and the literature of good/effective teaching. The literature in these three areas is essential for discovering the various elements that the effective middle level social studies teachers have in common. Interviews were conducted with seven good middle school social studies teachers and one former middle school social studies teacher who is currently working in conjunction with the Oklahoma State Department of Education and a non-profit organization, providing workshops and consulting advice to social studies teachers throughout Oklahoma. A naturalistic, qualitative methodology, using McCracken's (1988) long interview, is used to study the characteristics of the good middle level school teachers' methods, ideas, and beliefs.

## Background

A review of Shaver's (ed.) *Handbook of Research on Social Studies Teaching and Learning* (1991) has four chapters devoted to Teachers in Social Studies Education: Cuban's chapter on the History or Teaching in Social Studies; Adler's chapter on The Education of Social Studies Teachers; Leming's chapter on Teacher Characteristics and Social Studies Education; and Stanley's chapter on Teacher Competence for Social Studies. Each chapter addresses the question of good teaching in the area of social studies but does not directly address the views or expertise of good middle level social studies teachers. Additionally, Wittrock's (ed.) *Handbook on Research on Teaching* (1986) devotes one chapter directly to the teaching of social studies. These studies do not deal directly with the views of good social studies teachers at the middle school level; therefore a study of such teachers' beliefs and methodologies would be beneficial to educational research and practice in the area of social studies at the middle grade level.

The teaching of social studies has been a significant part of public education curriculum since the inception of the American common school. Early educators believed that social studies was the key to creating a more productive citizenry among the common people in order to make the people better citizens (Cuban, 1991). Thomas Jefferson believed that the purpose of education was to teach Americans how to be good citizens. He felt that if Americans

did not learn how to be good citizens, then democracy would fail. Poor voting records, lax law observance and disregard for democratic principles and processes are commonplace in today's society; therefore, it follows that better social studies education is needed to improve citizenship if democracy is to survive in this country (M. Reggio, personal communication, June 17, 1994). Successful social studies teachers at the middle level must use their subject to help instill the values of democracy in our young people. Citizenship and democracy must be nurtured during these critical middle level years. In order for this to occur, the middle level social studies teacher must enjoy the subject, know the significance and importance of teaching social studies, be thoroughly knowledgeable in all aspects of the subject, and know how to impart the knowledge. The good social studies teacher is able to decrease apathy and play a significant role in creating a better citizenry, leading to a better democracy.

As a middle level educator, I often hear students express a tremendous dislike for social studies subjects such as history, geography, civics and economics. In my opinion these classes should be some of the most exciting, fun classes that are taught in the middle grades. However, more often than not, the opposite is true. I believe the problem lies not with the subject matter but with the way the material is presented. Middle level social studies teachers must focus on the ideas that are learned in the social studies classroom. Often, the result of one's teaching is not reflected on a test paper, as the learning is often intrinsic and not internalized

immediately. The concepts of democracy and citizenship are often not concrete by definition; it is through nurturing and teaching in the middle level social studies curriculum that these concepts mature in later life.

### Plan of Study

The review of the literature in Chapter Two presents three types of research. The first section describes middle level educational characteristics, philosophy and psychology; the second section examines the social studies education research; and the third section examines the research on good or effective teachers in various subject areas and grade levels.

Chapter Three describes the methods used to collect data for the study. It presents the importance of the long interview using the methods of McCracken (1988), naturalistic study using the guidelines of Erlandson, et al. (1993), and the methods of phenomenological descriptive reflection of Van Manan (1990). McCracken's (1988) methods were used to interview and transcribe the data. Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen's (1993) guidelines of naturalistic inquiry were used in the overall research project, and Van Manen's (1990) methods of phenomenological study were used as part of the reflection process used in the presentation of the data. The interviews were conducted with seven practicing, experienced teachers, with at least five years teaching experience, who were identified as good/effective middle level social studies teachers by

peers, administrators, students, parents and professors at Oklahoma State University. The eighth person interviewed was a former middle school social studies teacher who now serves as the education coordinator for one of Oklahoma's non-profit organizations, operating in conjunction with the Oklahoma State Department of Education. This person travels throughout the state in an advisory/instructor capacity and conducts workshops and seminars. Because of his extensive knowledge of social studies and his working relationship with middle level social studies teachers, he was recommended for this study. The criteria used to identify good or effective teacher was someone who was competent in subject matter and teaching skills, someone who expected a lot from their students, someone who was loving, caring and who made learning an enjoyable experience. This teacher valued his/her students and what they learned, they were good role models who exemplified high morals and social standards. Additionally, this chapter provides a profile of each of the persons interviewed for this project.

Chapter Four is the presentation of the data obtained during the interviews. The interviews revealed what good/effective veteran middle level social studies teachers believe to be the differences between good, average, and poor social studies teachers at this level and the characteristics, beliefs and methodologies of these effective teachers. The data obtained during these interviews are organized by the *Emergent Category Designation* as suggested by Erlandson, et al. (1993) and were divided into three major categories:

(1) Incompetent , (2) average, and (3) good middle level social studies teachers. The good teacher data is further divided according to: characteristics, methodology, relationships, middle school/junior high characteristics, philosophy and psychology, teacher values and moral/social issues, and curriculum/evaluation.

Chapter Five is an analysis of the data. In this chapter, an analysis of patterns that emerged is compared with the existing literature, and the educator's responses are compared with each other.

Chapter Six is a summary of the findings of the data along with the findings and conclusions, recommendations for further study and final comments. This chapter reveals what the teachers interviewed believe to be the key elements of effective middle level social studies teaching.

### Significance of the Study

Naturalistic studies of good/effective teachers are rare in educational research, but such research is almost non-existent for the middle level social studies teacher. Cuban (1991) found that research on social studies teachers is scarce, noting:

In the three editions of the *Handbook on Teaching and Learning*, covering over three decades of research, for example, articles on the teaching of social studies were scarce. In none of them were studies cited of teacher behavior in the classrooms. In the forty-nine issues of *Theory and Research in Social Education*

published since 1983, there were 221 articles, excluding book reviews; three described and analyzed teaching behaviors, two dealt with elementary teachers (one examined planning) and Australian high school teachers. Occasional ethnography's to investigate the topography of social studies have begun to appear, but they remain rare (p. 199).

The beliefs, practices and methodologies of good teachers would be valuable for middle level social studies educational training, in-service programs and continuing education. The purpose of the study was to compare and contrast the differences and likenesses of teaching practices of the selected good/effective teachers of social studies at the middle level with each other and with the existing literature. Eight good middle level social studies educators were interviewed and the data were compiled, examined and analyzed.

As long as the class bells continue to ring and teachers continue to teach, I believe the classroom teacher will remain the critical element of the pedagogical process. Teachers can learn better ways to reach and teach today's children so they can produce better informed citizens and members of society. These teachers owe it to themselves and to their students to do the best they can to create and maintain a more productive society.

More and more schools are relying on peer examples to improve the teaching methodologies of novice teachers. The college classroom, while providing many educational theories, cannot take the place of actual hands-on experiences. The veteran teacher provides insight into education that is often overlooked or ignored in the college classroom and/or educational textbook. Porter and

Brophy (1988) revealed in their study, "Research lets us see how others teach. We can see the effects of their behavior, test our decisions against theirs, match our strategies against theirs, and gain insight into ourselves and our teaching" (p. 74). It is the insight and evolution of the skilled, competent, experienced teacher that can be utilized to help create more effective middle school teachers in the area of social studies.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

What is middle level education? Middle level schools are those places characterized by students, ages anywhere from eleven to fifteen, in grades sixth through ninth, who have an abundance of energy, a variety of mood swings, and who are in various physical and mental stages of development. For these students, socialization and relationships become the key factors in their lives. For the most part these young teenagers attend either a middle school or a junior high school. These are the students who are progressing from Piaget's concrete operational stage to the formal operational stage. Learning for this group of students should not be categorized, since not all students develop at the same time. The middle level school organization must learn to deal with these students who are at a place in their lives where they are impressionable and vulnerable.

What is social studies? A debate over this question has been going on for years, and since the beginning of western civilization, social studies has been linked with good citizenship. According to Aristotle, "That which contributes most to the permanence of constitutions is the adaptation of education to the form of government. The best laws will be of no avail unless the young are trained by habit and example in the spirit of the constitution" (Lybarger, 1991, p.3). Robert Barr, James Barth, and S. Samuel Shermis (1978) have identified three distinct traditions in the field

of social study's education: First the social studies taught as citizenship transmission; second, the social studies taught as social science; and third, the social studies taught as reflective inquiry. Andre (1979) adds that citizenship is the most important reason for teaching social studies.

What is a good teacher? This, like social studies, has no standard definition that fits every situation. Some define the good teacher as someone who is "on-task" forty-three minutes out of forty-five, while others define the good teacher as someone who is fun and cares greatly for the children s/he teaches, and still others say it is the person who's students perform best on standardized achievement tests. Harry Wong (1991), teacher, author, and lecturer, has described what he thinks the three basic characteristics of the good or effective teacher are:

- Has positive expectations for student success.
- Is an extremely good classroom manager.
- Knows how to design lessons for student mastery (p.9).

Wong (1991) further states, "When you look at the truly effective teachers, you will also find caring, warm, lovable people" ( p. 69).

The review of the literature is divided into three parts: (1) The definition, psychology and philosophy of middle level education; (2) social studies research and education; and (3) teaching

characteristics of good/effective classroom teachers. For the purpose of this study, social studies curriculum consists of the following subjects: civics, economics, geography, and U.S., medieval and world history. Middle level schools in Oklahoma will be defined as grades six, seven, eight and nine since there is no standard grouping.

### What's In the Middle?

Throughout the state of Oklahoma, young adolescents, somewhere between the ages of eleven and fifteen, find themselves in junior highs or middle schools. Many of the educators teaching in these grades cannot effectively describe the difference between a middle school and a junior high, but certainly all will concur that this is the age where a teacher most often hears, "I don't have a pencil," "I lost my homework," "I didn't know we had a test today," or "George has my purse!" Most teachers of this age group will quickly agree this is the time when the students put their heads on a shelf and leave them there for a few years.

In many school systems, junior highs were suddenly renamed middle school. The majority of schools, however, still operated under the junior high philosophy. For years colleges of education combined the middle grades with either elementary education or secondary education when teaching education courses, thus omitting the significant psychological development and difference of students in

the middle grades. Many secondary teachers found themselves teaching in middle schools and not being properly prepared.

Today, educators know that the middle grades are distinctly different and that teachers who plan to teach this grade level need to be trained specifically for this area and not commingled with the elementary or high school teacher education curriculum.

The current trend for middle level education in the United States is towards the middle school arrangement. The concept of middle schools began in the early 1950's and 1960's and had a tremendous growth spurt in the late 1960's and early 1970's. According to Gatewood and Dilg (1975), "The middle school has been one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of American education." Gatewood and Dilg (1975) see the following characteristics as necessary for middle schools:

- A unique program adapted to the needs of the pre- and early adolescent student.
- The widest possible range of intellectual, social and physical experiences.
- Opportunities for exploration and development of fundamental skills needed by all while making allowances for individual learning patterns. It should maintain an atmosphere of basic respect for individual differences.
- A climate that enables students to develop abilities, find facts, weigh evidence, draw conclusions and determine values that keeps their minds open to new facts.
- Staff members who recognize and understand the

student's needs, interests, backgrounds, motivations, goals, as well as stresses, strains, frustrations, and fears.

- A smooth educational transition between the elementary school and the high school while allowing for the physical and emotional changes taking place due to transescence.
- An environment where the child, not the problem, is most important and where the opportunity to succeed is ensured for all students.
- Guidance in the development of mental processes and attitudes needed for constructive citizenship and the development of lifelong competencies, and appreciation's needed for effective use of leisure.
- Competent instructional personnel who will strive to understand the students whom they serve and develop professional competencies which are both unique and applicable to the adolescent student.
- Facilities and time which allow students and teachers an opportunity to achieve the goals of the program to their fullest capabilities (pp. 2-3).

Gatewood and Dilg (1975) go on to say that research indicates a significant gap between the main ideas of the theoretical middle school and the actual educational practices. Many middle schools call themselves middle schools but have adopted the educational programs of junior high schools, not completely following through on the true middle school concept.

Interdisciplinary units, ID units, or I.D.U.'s, stress the relationships between subject areas and have recently taken on a larger part of the middle school philosophy. ID units provide

students with an in-depth, short term focus on a specific topic, generate strong student/staff interest and motivation, and involve students, staff, and parents in the curriculum development and decision making process (Kerekes, 1987). According to Kerekes (1987), "The I.D.U. has gradually become part of the fabric of our middle school" (p. 12). By using the interdisciplinary approach, students are able to see how each learning experience contributes toward a new unity of knowledge (Gatewood & Dilg, 1975).

Many middle schools use the team or interdisciplinary teaming approach. The team consists of four to five teachers who teach the core subjects and teach the same students. In some schools the teams are called families, and activities and interdisciplinary units are based on a family concept.

An important trait of middle schools is the learner characteristics and character make-up of the adolescents who attend these schools. This student falls within Piaget's concrete and formal operational stages. The concrete stage is tangible and the adolescent is able to organize information around categories or concepts and make generalizations. The formal operational stage on the other hand is characterized by abstract thought, utilizing logic and reasoning in decision making processes. This stage is the beginning of thought processes that will emerge in the adult (Steer, 1980). Steer goes on to say, "The developmental aspects of these two stages can be enhanced within the middle school environment. Learning experiences can be structured for youth so that there is an easier

transition to the advanced stages of thought. By grades five and six, information is ordered, organized, and structured within the mind. By grades seven and eight, deductive reasoning and reflective thinking are operating, thus lending greater flexibility to the earlier thought processes" (p. 3).

Nancy Doda (1981) recalls a poster that declares, "No one ever said teaching was going to be easy," which she aptly re-worded for middle level teaching, "No one ever said teaching in the middle was going to be possible" ( p. 7). She further declares:

All classroom teachers work hard, but I am convinced that the task of teaching transescents can be the most puzzling, frustrating and exhausting job of all. Early adolescents are experiencing dramatic physical, intellectual and social changes. They are young lives in momentum and flux, perplexed and uncertain, searching to find out who they are and what they can become. In today's fast-moving, crisis-full and often indifferent society, their struggle to grow presents an unbelievable challenge with high risk of defeat. No wonder teachers, as well as parents and administrators, often query about life after middle school ( p. 7).

Doda (1981) has characterized middle level teaching by the five categories that she calls the 5'C's. First is *Community*, believing that middle level schools must provide the student with a sense of community where students can be part of a meaningful group that is small enough for a student's identity to develop but large enough for the student to experience diversity. This is usually achieved in

middle levels, especially middle schools, with the interdisciplinary team approach.

Second is *Caring*. It is easy for a kid to slip through the cracks, and middle school is where this can easily happen. In the small communities within the learning environment, it is easy for teachers to establish a better teacher-pupil relationship. Using the interdisciplinary team approach there is more communication between the teachers and students within the team. This creates the caring environment. "The middle school must have a curriculum for caring" (Doda, 1981, p. 8).

Third is *Connectedness*. This allows students to be connected in significant ways, not just by ability or age grouping. Doda advocates multi-age grouping saying, "Evidence shows that in non-graded middle schools where kids and teachers spend 3-4 years together, discipline problems are less severe, vandalism declines, and, most important, strong teacher-student connections are established for kids who are struggling to become someone, somewhere" (Doda, 1981, p. 9).

Fourth is *Color*. Color is the spice of the middle school, the exploratory programs, special interest classes, and extra-curricular activities. Many middle level schools are reducing the curriculum in an effort to devote more time to the core subjects. "Middle schools must have color. Exploratory, special interest programs, clubs, independent study, and all the frills we might be tempted to neglect, deserve a place in the school schedule. Without a chance to explore,

to try out our talents and to enjoy school, our students will find lots to do at school besides learn turn-off, turn-out or drop-out" (Doda, 1981, p. 9).

The final C is *Collaboration*. This is where the middle schools join heads and hearts in an effort to create the middle schools we need in this country. Doda goes on to say, "When teachers are organized in interdisciplinary teams with full responsibility to make decisions concerning student scheduling, budgeting of materials, and the use of instructional time and resources, cooperation begins to grow and democracy to flourish" (Doda, 1981, p. 10).

The middle years are difficult at best, not only for students, but for parents and for teachers also. I believe the truly dedicated middle school teacher is rewarded many times a day, probably more so than any other grade level teacher. According to the teachers interviewed for this project, the middle level teacher probably faces more stress than teachers at other grade levels because the job of teaching adolescents is often not an easy one.

Today, the middle school is the primary structure used for middle level education in the United States. There has been a tremendous growth in this direction in the past ten years. According to Martorella (1991), "The effective middle school differs from the traditional junior high, which was often seen as a miniature high school, in more respects than grade organization. It involves a transformation in the way the teachers, administrators, support

professionals, and staff work with students and one another. It also relates to how time is allocated and subjects are taught" (pp. 78-79).

### The Social Studies

Social studies as a subject is continually growing and evolving. Scholars have debated for years over a standard definition of social studies and have questioned whether the social studies should be taught as knowledge as an end in itself, or whether it should be taught from the prospective of citizenship education. Regardless of what scholars believe, the communities and school boards have looked at social studies as a way to instill patriotism and citizenship among the people (Barr, Barth, & Shermis, 1977).

Prior to 1880, social studies was taught at home and at church more often than it was taught in the classroom. At the time of the Revolutionary War, the majority of the people did not attend school, and if they did, it was for a short period of time. Schools were not the only source for education, as many children who were educated during this era were educated in the home. To the religious sect, churches were much more important than schools, and many children were educated through religious organizations. Textbooks of the 1880's reveal that social studies education taught values, and social and moral issues by using historical myths, parables, and religious works (Barr, Barth & Shermis, 1977).

Between 1880 and 1900 public education began to thrive, partially because many states had compulsory attendance laws by that time. American History dominated the social studies and if government, economics and sociology were taught at all, it was done as an extension of the history classes. Shortly after 1900 the social scientists began forming their own curriculum courses, breaking away from the history curriculum (Barr, Barth & Shermis, 1977). Various professional organizations, including the American Historical Association, founded in 1884, were established as a result of the new social studies curriculum. In 1921, Earl Rugg helped form the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), an organization that has had much influence on social studies teaching and education in the twentieth century United States.

It is difficult to explain the definition of social studies for two reasons:

First, it is a field that is clearly in the process of emerging. Having been recognized for only 60 years or so, the social studies is a new professional field. It did not spring to life fully formed. It has slowly, and often painfully, evolved as a field, and it is most certainly still evolving. Not until the last two decades has a body of research begun to be developed, and even more recently have scholars attempted to develop conceptual schemes to explain the diversity in the field.

Second, and most important, is the fact that social studies has been the focus of a number of vested interest groups, all of which have sought to maintain influence, if not control, over the field.

Unlike the areas of English, mathematics, and science, where there is a rather direct relationship between university scholars and curriculum offerings at the elementary and secondary level, there has never been agreement over who was or should be responsible for the social studies curriculum in the public schools (Barr, Barth & Shermis, 1977, p.15).

Cuban (1991) discovered there is little research to answer the question, "How did social studies teachers teach?" Cuban divided his research into two eras; 1900-1930 and 1940-1980.

In the first era, Cuban (1991) cited a study by Stevens (1912) on how students were questioned in the social studies environment. In this study the researcher observed 100 social studies teachers whom principals had identified as good or superior teachers. The researcher made observations during a class period and found that the pattern of instruction consisted of students answering questions at a rapid pace after the teacher covered specific chapters in a textbook. The researcher concluded that the instructors were more like drillmasters than educators.

Cuban (1991) found that in an early study by Hughes and Melby (1930) in the Chicago area showed that the most frequent activity in the social studies was asking questions. The teachers ask questions of the students about eighty-two percent of the time. The second most frequent activity was making "informal comments" which Cuban took to mean lecturing, explaining and clarifying.

A third study of social studies examined by Cuban (1991) was conducted by a professor at the Teacher's College at Columbia

University. A graduate student observed 104 New York high school classes taught by teachers who were identified by principals as "the best." Of the classes, twenty-one were social studies teachers and twenty of the twenty-one were teaching from the textbook.

It is indicated that in the early part of this century the best research reveals that the majority of the so called good social studies teachers were teaching directly from the text using the lecture method, and social studies was taught from the "drillmaster" approach, where the teacher would ask questions and the students would respond in a drill-like, rote fashion.

In the era between 1940-1980, Wiley (1977) observed, "It can be safely said that we know very little about what were the most commonly used classroom practices in social studies throughout the United States at any particular time during the last 20 years."

By the early 1940's, the social studies had gone through various stages of development. It had changed from patriotic indoctrination to learning history for the sake of history, and finally emerged with the general agreement that the study of social studies and history would help create a better citizenry. The goal of social studies during this era was to develop effective, critical thinking, and participating citizens through the study of history and social sciences. However, the war and other events in the world brought new problems for the social studies, and between 1940 and the present time, social studies suffered through some difficult times (Barr, Barth & Shermis, 1977).

More studies of social studies teaching occurred during the years between 1940 and 1980, but many of the studies were surveys and questionnaires of classroom practices and the data were often flawed. According to Cuban (1991), Wiley (1977) and Weiss (1978) discovered, "Social studies classes will be strikingly similar to those many of us experienced as youngsters: textbook assignments followed by recitation led by a teacher who, in his or her own way, likes students and tries to show concern for them and avoids controversial issues, but tries to pitch the class at the student level" (Cuban, 1991, p. 201).

Applebee, Langer and Mullis (1987) found that in student reports of U.S. History classes, eighty-nine percent of the classes used textbooks weekly, five percent of the students used no text at all. Eighty-three percent of the students said they memorized information at least once a week while sixty-eight percent of the eleventh graders said they never wrote long papers for their social studies classes. A third of the students saw a film at least once a week, and the most popular or frequent form of instruction was lecturing, which occurred ninety-seven percent of the time (Shaver, ed., 1991). Gross and Badger (1960) found that even though lecturing and formal recitation at the lower school level has been long under attack, both techniques continue to be used to a considerable degree by many teachers.

Barr, Barth & Shermis (1977) found that by the 1960's there was a revolution in social studies:

By 1960, the turmoil of two decades paved the way for what might be viewed as a revolution in the social studies, a revolution engineered and implemented largely by historians and social scientists. Both historians and social scientists were attracted to the field of social studies by the lure of huge federal grants for curriculum development. Almost overnight, scholars in all of the social sciences and history began curriculum development projects. Never before had an effort at social studies revision begun with such a popular support and financial backing, and with such an abundance of scholars from so many academic disciplines working together.

However, by the 1970's it was clear that the dream had not become a reality and that the new social studies had been stillborn. The 1970's arrived with the social studies once again under attack and still searching for identity. Looking back now from our vantage point in the late seventies, it would seem that the issues that had confronted the social studies for the past 70 years were still unresolved: concerns over the question of indoctrination, conflicting goals of instruction, and disputes over content (p. 35).

In spite of this, the social studies have continued to evolve over the past fifty years and will probably continue to evolve, as it seems to be a never ending process.

James Leming's (1991) research on teacher characteristics in social studies education revealed that little is known about the relationship between teacher personalities and teaching effectiveness. A variety of teacher characteristics, such as teacher intelligence, enthusiasm, family background, experience, gender, political orientation, professional values, cognitive style, moral

reasoning and other characteristics can be part of a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Also, there are other criteria for evaluating student outcomes besides academic achievement. Attitudes, values and citizenship are often valued outcomes of social studies education. Thus, neither the teacher nor the student can be totally evaluated by a grade made on an examination or a score that is made on a standardized achievement test. Outcomes of good social studies instruction are often intrinsic in nature and not measurable in educational terms.

Is there standard criteria for the good social studies teacher? At this time there is little research on the subject. However, basic characteristics that seem consistent with teaching style can be identified: tolerance for ambiguity, open-mindedness, intellectual flexibility, risk taking, and a provisional view of the truth. Leming goes on to say, "On the other hand, a high need for order, dogmatism, intellectual rigidity, absolute notions regarding truth and the like seem inconsistent with such a teaching style" (Leming, 1991, p. 224).

Oliver and Shaver (1966/1974) listed the main characteristics of *jurisprudential teachers* in terms of intellectual orientations and attitudes toward students. They:

- Are open to the exploration of ideas.
- Are able to think in other than categorical terms.
- Are able to tolerate the conflict of ideas and ideals.
- Are able to recognize values embedded in controversies.

- Have a tentative, probabilistic view of knowledge.
- Perceive students as rational human beings with the right to be involved in decision making.
- Value student opinions and problem-solving styles.
- Are be willing to interact freely with students in an exchange of ideas.

Leming (1991) claimed there was absolutely no evidence linking student learner outcomes to teacher characteristics and he believes that continued research in this area is futile.

Goodlad's (1984) data revealed that secondary students (he does not distinguish here between middle levels and high schools) consider social studies to be less important than other core subjects, such as math and English. He went on to say that junior and senior high school students regard social studies as their least useful subject; seeing no need for it in their present or future lives. He added, "Something strange seems to happen to them [students] on the way so the [social studies] classroom. The topics of study become removed from their intrinsically human character, reduced to dates and places readers will recall memorizing for tests. Students were asked to rate their interest of topics from several subjects, including the social studies. Topics from the social studies were rated high, but social studies as a subject was rated relatively low in interest among the several curricular fields" (p. 212).

As Goodlad (1984) and others have noted, social studies is associated with emphasis on authority and memorization; most of the

students' activities are passive, such as reading texts, listening, completing boring worksheets, and taking tests. One of the main goals of social studies education is to teach students reasoning and decision making skills, conceptual understanding, analyzing and interpreting data, and developing skills for participatory citizenship. There is definite difference between the theory and practice in many social studies classrooms.

Susan Adler's (1991) review of the literature between 1978 and 1988 revealed many ideas of what social studies teachers ought to be and ought to accomplish. Adler indicated that the failure is in the teacher preparation programs, stating, "Jantz, Weaver, Cirrincione, and Ferrell (1985) argued that teacher preparation programs failed to prepare pre-service teachers to use inquiry techniques. Paul (1986) and Unks (1985) questioned how could we expect to find critical thinking skills being taught in schools when teachers themselves do not possess these skills" (p. 210).

Adler (1991) found that there are other concerns, such as teachers lacking knowledge of social studies content, teachers not placing enough emphasis on citizenship, teachers lacking knowledge in the area of economics, and teachers who are computer illiterate. There is also a great need for teachers to be more global in their thinking. "In sum," Adler adds, "it would seem that there is much that ought to be done. But teacher education must proceed with a knowledge of what is being done and to what effect" (p. 210).

Adler (1991) believes the problem with methods' texts is that they give little attention to innovative teaching ideas. The texts, for the most part, give little training information on teaching concepts and do not encourage teachers to ask questions or reflect on the global nature of today's society.

Stanley (1991) found little research on teacher effectiveness in the area of social studies. According to Stanley, the goal of teacher effectiveness research has been to see how teacher behaviors (processes) on specific outcomes (products) can be measured objectively by achievement tests in reading or math. Jere Brophy (1986) found that effective teachers are more goal oriented and have business type personalities. They expect mastery of objectives and spend most of the classroom time engaged in academic activities. Classroom management is essential as the students must be fully aware of classroom procedures and regulations. According to Brophy, effective teachers constantly monitor student progress and give timely and adequate feedback on student performance.

McKinney and Larkins (1982) believe that teacher enthusiasm in social studies has a positive outcome on student learning. Using two groups of students, one exposed to enthusiastic teaching the other to non-enthusiastic teaching, they generalized that most students prefer high levels of teacher enthusiasm and that students have a tendency to learn more from lessons taught from enthusiastic teachers. While they did state that their findings were not

conclusive, they did believe there was enough evidence to support the importance of teacher enthusiasm in the social studies classroom.

Brophy (1986) also noted that effective teachers are enthusiastic and well structured. They state questions clearly and use a variety of questions that address various levels of understanding. Their assignments are carefully prepared and involve challenging experiences that include a high level of success.

Stanley (1991) looked at the wide range of behaviors of effective teachers. He found that the research by Wineberg and Wilson (in press) revealed characteristics of effective teachers in great detail. They describe the characteristics of an effective first year U.S. History teacher by saying:

Her teaching competence was reflected in the skills and knowledge of her students during a debate on the American Revolution. The teacher's low teaching profile was because of her in-depth historical knowledge and extraordinary abilities in planning the class. In particular, this teachers' lack of direct intervention during class as an intentional strategy to create opportunities to learn to do things they would not likely learn to do via direct instruction. It was also clear that this teacher's approach to instruction was strongly influenced by her understanding of history as being held together by several key ideas. Consequently, she started the year with a unit of ideas of great thinkers of world history as well as our nation's distant past. An approaching goal was to have students grasp the dynamic process of history as the result of this activity.

In this competent teacher's classroom, a textbook did not drive instruction; teacher talk was

minimal, and there were no student worksheets. Instead, students were involved in serious dialogue during which they analyzed in depth. In a sense, the students learned history by recreating instead of just reading it (p. 254).

Another competent teacher from this same study describes a different approach:

This teacher was highly visible and at the center of the classroom activities. His teaching techniques were similar to well-developed acting skills. In addition, he was keenly sensitive to individual students needs and interests. Many low level questions were asked to involve the students, and the teacher expected the students to know the answers. He urged them to seek additional evidence from many sources, including class notes, to document their views. All this was accomplished without a detailed lesson plan or use of a particular text. Instead, this teacher relied on a detailed notebook of relevant information and ideas gathered during 17 years of experience (p. 253).

In both of these examples, practice in the classroom was a result of the teacher's understanding of the content. The content was important, but in both cases the teachers were trying to get their students excited about history and to see how historical knowledge is developed. The teachers emphasized that a text is only one source of information, and students were encouraged to seek other sources of information.

Stanley (1991) found that social studies teachers would be much more effective if they had a greater knowledge of their subject

and if they could instill the idea that social studies is more than just a collection of facts, dates, concepts and interpretations. Further, he discovered that there is sufficient data to support the idea that teacher knowledge of subject matter is a necessary and important component of being a competent social studies teacher. His research indicated that little emphasis has been placed on critical thinking skills. However, researchers believe that critical thinking skills are essential for promoting citizenship in a democratic society that is constantly plagued with complex social problems. A competent social studies teacher will demonstrate such critical thinking skills and try to develop these skills in their students.

Further research by Stanley (1991) revealed that in order to develop critical thinking skills, a student must have the appropriate content knowledge and background. Cornbleth (1985) found that those students most adept in critical thinking skills had a good understanding of the subject matter and problem-solving skills. Competent social studies teachers not only teach content, they teach critical thinking skills.

Armento (1986) found little difference between the social studies classroom today and the classroom twenty years ago. Teacher dominated lectures, and discussions are the most common tools of instruction, using a textbook as a resource. There is little discussion on social and controversial issues, and it is not surprising to find that students are generally apathetic toward social studies, describing

such courses as boring because facts rather than ideas are emphasized.

Armento (1986) discovered two basic problems with traditional research in this area. The first problem is that typical research in social studies examines correctional or causal relationships of instruction style or specific behaviors on student learner outcomes. A wide range of topics have been studied; inquiry techniques, types of questions, instructional games, simulation's, frequency of tests and quizzes, and teacher enthusiasm. Student behaviors are often viewed as outcomes of instruction and are seldom the independent variables in research studies in this area

The second problem is defining the variables examined in studies of social studies education. Most of the independent variables used in such research are defined as specific teaching techniques, and little is known about how these techniques or methods operate in comprehensive instructional approaches. The narrow focus of the research ignores the social, cultural, economic, and psychological factors that might have an effect on student learner outcomes. Researchers tend to simplify the nature of understanding. Also, affective and interpersonal learning components have been basically ignored. It is not known how these components contribute to citizenship development. "To examine these relationships," says Armento (1986), "a more holistic view of teaching-learning is needed" ( p. 944).

Armento (1986) sees the present literature as providing little information on teaching social studies, and generalizing the findings across subject matter is difficult because, "social studies content, processes and outcomes are conceptually different from those of other subject areas" ( p. 945). Ebel (1982) found that to produce more effective research, a wider recognition of the special functions and limitations and better research is needed on more important educational problems. He agrees with many other researchers in the area that teachers need to find more creative ways to make education work.

Armento (1986) suggests more research is needed on: (1) Clarification of conceptual problems; (2) Integration of theoretical principals; and (3) Establishment of a broader view of research on teaching social studies. Social studies research cannot be isolated from research on teaching, but since there are important differences in social studies, researchers should take this into consideration as social studies problems are not the same as problems in math or English.

Research has shown that the primary components of social studies instruction in schools today include recitation, discussion, use of textbook, games, simulation's, and group work. Recitation and discussion are used most frequently; recitation is used extensively from preschool through the university level in teaching these social studies. This usually involves a teacher-initiation, student-response, teacher-feedback pattern. The teacher primarily asks knowledge

level questions. Wilen and White (1991) looked at a study by Haynes (1935) and discovered that in a study of sixth grade history classes, questions were "solicitations of factual information, whereas only 17% could be classified as requiring students to think" (p. 485). They also revealed that Gall and Gall (1976) characterized the teacher-student interaction recitation pattern as "emphasizing lower-cognitive level questions, asked for the purpose of recalling information" ( Wilen & White, 1991, p.185). Wilen and White (1991) cited three studies (Crump, 1970; Godbold, 1969; Schreiber, 1967) conducted in the middle grade levels during the late 1960's where the major emphasis was once again on the lower-level knowledge based questions. They found Gall's 1970 research generalized that sixty percent of the questions that teachers asked were lower level knowledge questions, twenty percent used higher level thinking skills, while the other twenty percent were procedural in nature. Gall did a follow up study in 1984 and found the results to be the same as what he found in 1970. Wilen and White (1991) suggest that if teachers are going to be successful in teaching social studies, then "alternative forms of discourse that incorporate more of the characteristics of conversational dialogue offer much more potential for achieving social studies goals"(pp. 488-489).

Discussion is another frequently used methodology for teaching social studies. However, Wilen and White (1991) are quick to point out that discussion does not mean recitation. Wilen and White (1991) define discussion as "an educative and structured group

conversation between teacher and students about subject matter at the higher cognitive levels. A key word is *conversation*, which suggests that the interaction pattern is informal, involving the exchange of thoughts and feelings" (p. 489). Many forms of discussion are used in the social studies classroom, including inquiry, critical thinking about social issues, exploratory talk in which students find their own answers through their own exploration, and responsive teaching where the teacher tries to get students to a higher level of thinking through stretching their imaginations. Wilen and White (1991) best sum up discussion by stating, "Discussion is a structured conversation in which the participants work cooperatively to present, examine, compare and understand often diverse views about an academic topic of issue. Discussion more closely approximates natural conversation than recitation because it is slower paced and not driven by the questions or evaluations of one person [teacher]"(p. 492).

One discussion approach that has become popular in the social studies classroom is the dilemma approach. This approach grew out of theory and research surrounding Kohlberg's moral stages. Kohlberg believed that if children are to recognize their ideas, they must be engaged in discussion. One of Kohlberg's students, Moshe Blatt, was encouraged to lead discussion groups in which children had a chance to deal actively with moral issues. He presented moral dilemmas that engaged the classes in heated debates. He stepped in only to summarize, clarify, and sometimes present a view himself.

His presentation of dilemmas were conducive to a little higher level than the class, and he helped the kids by challenging their thinking and stimulating them to formulate better arguments (Crain, 1992).

The Kohlberg-Blatt method of inducing cognitive conflict exemplifies Piaget's equilibrium model. The child takes one view, becomes confused by discrepant information, and then resolves the confusion by forming a more advanced and comprehensive position. The method used in this technique is also called the dialectic process of Socratic teaching. The students give a view and then the teacher asks questions that help them see the inadequacies of their views, and they are then motivated to formulate better positions. Kohlberg analyzed his own stages in terms of implicit role-taking capacities which could allow an individual to consider other's points of view (Crain, 1992).

Teacher values, as well as moral and social issues should be a part of any middle level social studies curriculum. The middle level student is in the process of making important decisions about values, moral and social issues, and the social studies curriculum can easily lend itself to providing critical thinking skills that will encourage students to think about the decisions they make in these critical areas. Kohlberg has identified three stages of Moral Education:

- Moral Education is best conceived of as a natural process of dialogue among peers rather than a process of didactic instruction of preaching.
- The teacher and the curriculum are best conceived of as facilitators of this dialogue through pre-

senting challenging dilemmas or situations, through probing for student reasoning and listening to reasons, and through presenting reasoning at a higher stage of reasoning.

- While no other change occurs without any one of these elements in the discussion, the teacher may not be required to supply any of these conditions if the students themselves supply them (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1991, p. 148).

Through the moral dilemma discussions, students have a chance to experience autonomy as opposed to control. The students use the moral discussion and find the answers to value, social and moral questions through discovery rather than preaching. Jacqueline Brooks sums it up by stating, "Educators must invite students to experience the world's richness, empower them to ask their own questions and seek their own answers and challenge them to understand the world's complexities" (Brooks & Brooks, 1993, p. 5).

The social studies textbook can certainly be used as a primary source for teaching the social studies, but criticisms of textbooks range from teachers saying they are either too hard, too easy, too mundane, or too one sided. White (1988) did a study for *Theory and Research in Social Education* and found textbooks to be, "biased, bland, superficial, and dull" (p. 115-140). Often textbooks are ambiguous, and the audible groan of the students can be heard instantly when the teacher says, "Okay students, get out your books and turn to page 54."

Games and simulations are probably most effective in the middle and elementary grade levels, however, these are definitely

not restricted to these levels. Role playing is an important tool used in many classrooms from kindergarten through college. Games and simulations give the learners the opportunity to experience learning and making learning active rather than passive. Clegg (1991) found that using games and simulations makes learning fun, and although these have been used for many years, they did not become major teaching tools until the late 1950's.

One other method that is popular in social studies education is the use of groups. Groups are used for various purposes, such as brainstorming, consensus decision making, decision making by ratings and agenda use (Martorella, 1991). Cooperative learning groups are increasing in popularity among middle level social studies teachers, however, often teachers refer to the grouping of students as cooperative learning, when technically they are just doing study groups. Advocates of cooperative learning believe that students do their best when working in this type situation. It is through this type instruction that students are motivated to do their best, help each other, and organize their thinking through dialogue and elaboration (Martorella, 1991). According to Martorella (1991), Johnson and Johnson (1984) did a study which found that cooperative learning groups, "foster interdependence, individual accountability, and group processing of information whereas traditional types do not" (p. 118). It is important to note that cooperative learning groups must have specific tasks, and each person in the group must have an active role. Simply pulling the

chairs together and saying, "Let's do these fifty questions in groups," is not cooperative learning and will not produce the desired results (Martorella, 1991). A great deal of research has been done on cooperative learning techniques, and the results show that this learning tool is very effective, especially at the elementary and middle levels.

The methods discussed here are the ones primarily used to teach social studies, but they are not the only methods. Many school districts are able to utilize computers to a large extent, and certainly many teachers stress the importance of research, especially in the upper grade levels. According to Martorella (1991), "The ability to select appropriate information, record it accurately, and organize it in some accessible fashion constitutes one of the social scientist's most important collection of skills. The ability is also a vital competency for the effective citizen... students should have opportunities to experiment with different conventions used by social scientists for categorizing, recording, and sharing data" (p. 174).

### Good Teaching

The last area of the literature review reveals the characteristics of the good teachers. While these studies are not specific to social studies or to middle school teachers, they will serve as guidelines in the data analysis of the good middle level social studies teacher.

Recently, when I attended a banquet honoring outstanding teachers in northeast Oklahoma, Brother David Poos, SSC, Director/Principal of Bishop Kelley High School in Tulsa, Oklahoma, delivered the invocation. During the invocation, Brother David recalled reading a description of a good person, written by Abraham Levitsy, a clinical psychologist at the University of California at Berkeley. The priest took this description and reworded it to describe the good teacher. He described the good teacher by saying, "Now and then we meet persons who have a certain aura. They radiate an atmosphere which leaves us singularly free from pressure. They are glad to express opinions, but we feel no compulsion to agree. We feel emancipated and refreshed, and these people are not cold or aloof, it is simply that they have such emotional solidity that they want nothing from us other than that which we can freely give. A therapeutic atmosphere is set up in which others feel safe, can be themselves, can flourish and grow. These fortunate individuals have the power to convey a most extraordinary gift" (Brother D. Poos, personal communication, May 9, 1994).

Finding a standard criteria for the expert pedagogue is certainly not easy. Berliner (1986), in trying to find the good teachers for a research project, thought he might use the nominees for teacher of the year from various states. The national teacher program is sponsored by the council of Chief State School Officers and two commercial publishers. The winner of the annual competition is honored at a White House ceremony. To become teacher of the year,

a competition that has been going on for thirty-five years, each state submits its own candidate to a national committee. The national search committee looks "for those who exemplify the finest in the profession" and who will "represent good teachers everywhere" ( p. 8). Each state has different criteria for selecting its candidate; in one state the judge is from *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine. In only thirty percent of the states were previous winners at the state level used for judges. The winners at the state level then prepare a portfolio and submit it to the national committee for review, then four finalists are chosen. Next, a brief, on-site interview and video-taping is done by a representative of *Good Housekeeping* magazine, one of the sponsors. Data is then sent back to the judges and a winner is chosen.

Berliner (1986) found the qualifications of judges for other events, and discovered:

We learned that to become a livestock judge in Arizona you ordinarily have to take a year of livestock evaluation courses at a college... . The American Kennel Club's application for a judge requires ten years of documented experience in the field... . In Olympic judging it takes considerable time and money to perfect one's skills. In gymnastics and synchronized swimming it takes about seven years to be considered a first rate judge. In figure skating it can take ten to fifteen years.

In sum, judging livestock, crops, dogs, and athletics takes years of practice. University training is often provided. Competitive testing of judges is commonplace and the personal qualifications

of the judges are scrutinized carefully. The honorable profession of education would be lucky if it could become ten percent as rigorous as the judging of livestock, potatoes, poultry, and figure skating (p 9).

Berliner (1986) notes that it takes more credentials to be a livestock judge, or Olympic judge, than it takes to be a judge for the National Teacher of the Year award.

Alexander's (1959) publication, *Are You a Good Teacher?* is as applicable today as when it was written thirty years ago. Alexander defines the good teacher as one who's teaching is a thoroughly desirable quality and lists five characteristics of a good teacher:

- The teacher's relation to individual pupils; the more the teacher knows and helps pupils individually, the better the results.
- The teacher's preparation and planning; the better prepared the teacher training, knowledge, experience, and specific planning for the class, the better the learning of pupils.
- The use of teaching aids; the more appropriate and varied the aids (books, films, people and so on) and the wiser their use, the more effective the learning.
- The involvement of pupils in varied learning experiences; the more pupils are involved, the more generally good results.
- The dynamic leadership of the teacher; the more genuinely enthusiastic and dynamic the teacher, the more interested, enthusiastic and successful the pupils (pp. 16-17).

Alexander believes that schools must do a better job of citizenship education. He states that successful teachers are well informed in civic matters, and they have the ability to interest their pupils in learning how to become productive citizens. "The events of the 1950's demonstrate that today's youth and their teachers must be world citizens too" (p. 7). It is interesting to note that Adler's (1991) research parallels Alexander in examining the need for better citizenship education and a more global perspective.

Doyle (1977) sees the successful teacher as one who maintains a high level of student work involvement with low levels of student disruptions, keeping the students on task longer. He, like Berliner, believes the longer time spent on academic tasks, the more the students will achieve.

Eisner (1985) believes the primary objective of good teaching is to lead the class toward the objectives while constantly monitoring and adjusting. This allows students to participate in ways that utilize their interests and learning styles. He compares and contrasts teaching to playing basketball; there are certain rules that must be followed to play the game. In basketball, the rules remain stable while the coach constantly changes the game plan. While the knowledge might remain constant, the goals of the teacher do not, as they must be adapted to the individual students.

Brophy and Good (1986) have done extensive research in the area of effective teachers and have linked teacher effectiveness with student achievement. Most of the research done by them links

teacher effectiveness to student behavior. They believe in the process-product approach to effective teaching; where the teacher presents knowledge (process) and the student masters the knowledge (product).

Brophy did additional research with Porter (Porter and Brophy, 1988) and found that "good teaching is fundamental to effective schooling" (p.75). They have created a picture of effective teachers:

- Are clear about their instructional goals.
- Are knowledgeable about their content and strategies for teaching it.
- Communicate to their students what is expected of them and why.
- Make expert use of instructional materials in order to devote more time to practices that enrich and clarify content.
- Are knowledgeable about their students, adapting instruction to their needs and anticipating misconceptions in their existing knowledge.
- Address higher level as well as lower-level cognitive.
- Monitor students' understanding by offering regular appropriate feedback.
- Integrate their instruction with that in other subject areas.
- Are thoughtful and reflective about their practice.
- Accept responsibility for student outcomes (Potter & Brophy, 1988, p. 75).

At the Annual Conference of National Middle Schools' Association, held in November, 1993 in Portland, Oregon, Nancy Doda (1993) presented the habits of highly effective teachers. She had based her habits on Covey's (1989) best seller, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. The seven habits presented by Doda include:

- They [teachers] carry their own weather; you cannot control others. You must be responsible for your own self. When you change yourself, others will follow.
- They teach with the end in mind; good teachers avoid "hurry teaching." When the pressure is there to cover the curriculum, the effective teacher will always look at what will be the end results.
- They put first things first; they don't lose those teachable moments. They re-adjust when a teachable moment occurs.
- They do love; eighty-five percent of the problems in classrooms would disappear if teachers would just do love. Teachers cannot wait for the students to love them, they must love first... and love them all, each and every one.
- They believe learning is non-linear; effort is everything and intelligence has little to do with success in life.
- They play; great teachers are having all the fun. If you're not having fun, you're not successful. If you're having fun, eighty five percent of the time you're successful. Middle school teachers need to lighten up, a sense of humor is essential for the middle school teacher.

Doda summed up her presentation by telling the teachers that they should view teaching not as a job, but as a privilege, for there is no single mold for teaching; the essence lies within them. She concluded her presentation by saying, "The best teaching you ever did was when you didn't know how to teach, you used your intuition" (Doda, 1993).

Van Manen's (1991) research deals with pedagogy and tact. The good teacher, in his view, is not a teacher, but a pedagogue. "What is a child? To see a child is to see possibility, someone in the process of becoming" ( p. 1). He believes, "the child teaches me that as an adult I too can grow, that there are possibilities of living life differently" (p. 35). He describes the qualities essential to good pedagogy:

A sense of vocation, love and caring for children, a deep sense of responsibility, moral intuitiveness, self-critical openness, thoughtful maturity, tactful sensitivity toward the child's subjectivity, an interpretive intelligence, a pedagogical understanding of the child's needs, improvisational resolutionness in dealing with young people, a passion for knowing and learning the mysteries of the world, the moral fiber to stand up for something, a certain understanding of the world, active hope in the face of prevailing crises, and, not the least, humor and vitality (p.8).

Van Manen (1991) further believes that educators need to look out for the welfare of children; they must take risks, and they must be ready to take criticism for the risks they take. He says, "Pedagogy is a self-reflective activity that always must be willing to question

critically what it does and what it stands for" (p. 10). Van Manen (1991) uses a metaphor to beautifully describe the art of being a pedagogue:

In order to come to school and learn new things, students need to cross barriers (i.e. a street) to get over to the teacher's side (the school). But a teacher who is closed to the child's experience may not be aware that the student is still trying to understand things 'from the other side of the street.' Many teachers simply expect the students to come over to where the teacher stands. These are teachers who stand in front of the class explaining things; their attitude is that it is up to the students to 'get' the explanations. If they do not get it, then tough! ... But what the teacher forgets is that learning is always an individual affair.

A tactful educator realizes that it is not the child but the teacher who has to cross the street in order to go to the child's side. The teacher has to know 'where the child is,' 'how the child sees things,' how it is that this student has difficulty crossing the street to enter the domains of learning. The teacher has to stand beside the child and help the child locate places to cross over and find means for the child to successfully get to the other side, to these other worlds. In this gesture lies indeed the measuring of *educare*, 'to lead into' the world, the world of increased awareness, responsibility, growth and understanding (p. 156).

Van Manen believes that good teaching is more than the assimilation of knowledge. Through the study of pedagogy, the good teacher becomes enlightened and becomes the essence of teaching, not only to their students, but to themselves and others.

## Summary

The review of the literature consists of three primary sections. The first section reviewed the existing literature on middle level education, the psychology of the middle level student, and the structure of middle level education, including junior highs and middles schools. The second section reviewed the social studies educational research, and the third section reviewed the existing literature on good/effective teaching.

In American schools across the nation the primary structure of middle level education is the middle school. Schools of education and others are beginning to realize that the student between the ages of ten and fifteen is much different than an elementary or high school student. Because of this, more studies have been done to provide middle level education that is more conducive to the growing adolescent, the child who is making the transition from Piaget's concrete to the formal operational stage of development. The middle school student is at a vulnerable age, an age where s/he is learning values, socialization skills, and morals. The literature indicates that middle level educators can no longer sit by and just teach in isolation. To be effective at this level, middle level educators must pull together as teams, using interdisciplinary approaches, that will help the adolescent grow and mature physically, mentally, and psychologically.

The literature reveals that social studies education is not a new discipline. Our founding fathers realized the importance of social studies in educating the citizens in the ways of democracy, and even though not everyone attended public schools, the ideas and foundations of democracy were taught at home and in church. Thomas Jefferson believed that our form of democracy would certainly fail if history and civics were not taught. The idea of teaching citizenship goes back even further to Aristotle when he said that the young people must learn about their constitutions. While scholars cannot agree on a definition of social studies, most do agree that one of the primary, if not the primary outcomes of social studies, is to instill patriotism and citizenship. The literature also contained information on the different methodologies that are used by the social studies teacher and how effective the different methods are.

The last section of the literature review is on characteristics of the good/effective teacher. There were a wide variety of traits that different researchers felt most important to the education of today's youth. This literature revealed three theories of good teaching based on: (1) the ability of the teacher to maintain a high level of time on task, directed at achievement of outcome based objectives, (2) the identification of traits of good teachers, and (3) the good teacher as a pedagogue.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD OF STUDY

The methods of study and the processes used to select subjects and obtain data for this study are detailed in this chapter. Also contained in this chapter are profiles of the eight educators who were selected for this study.

#### Research Approval

Federal regulations and Oklahoma State University require an approval of all research studies that involve human subjects. The Oklahoma State University Research Services and the Institutional Review Board conduct this review to protect the rights of the individuals involved in the research. In compliance with this policy, this research project was approved and assigned the following number: ED-94-064. Appendix A contains this approval form.

#### Introduction

This study seeks to understand what good/effective middle level social studies teachers do to make them effective educators. A naturalistic study of veteran teachers is an appropriate way to enter into these teachers' world in order to have a thorough understanding of their pedagogical beliefs and methodologies.

Education often lends itself to the naturalistic study. Since teaching deals with the human being, a naturalistic study is an appropriate way to question how educators experience their world of teaching. Education is not an exact science or technology, and as Van Manen (1991) so aptly states, "Only recently has anyone recognized that education needs to turn back to the world of experience. Experience can open up understanding that restores a sense of embodied knowing" (p 9). Through the eyes of effective pedagogues, we can learn more about the art of good teaching.

Lightfoot's (1983) book, *The Good High School*, is an excellent example of naturalistic study. In Lightfoot's study, she entered into the world of various high schools in order to experience the high schools and create portraits of what the good high school does. Lightfoot became totally emerged in this world in an effort to examine this environment from the inside out.

Other naturalistic studies such as Lortie's (1975) *Schoolteacher*, Goodlad's (1984) *A Place Called School*, Jackson's (1968) *Life in Classrooms*, and Kozol's (1991) *Savage Inequalities* have been instrumental in changing views about teaching cultures and life in the classroom.

### Introduction to Methodology

Naturalistic research using the long interview provides an excellent way to gain a thorough understanding of a culture and the

people in that culture. Good middle level school social studies teachers represent a culture that can be studied in an effort to gain insight into what makes them effective. The information gathered from these effective teachers will be useful in improving the skills and methodologies of other middle level social studies teachers.

This study utilized McCracken's (1981) methods of the long interview, Erlandson, et al.'s (1993) methods of naturalistic inquiry, and Van Manen's (1990) methods of phenomenological, descriptive research. McCracken believes that the long interview creates an environment for a researcher to achieve qualitative goals that do not involve extensive time allotments. The interviewer gives their subjects fictitious names ensuring an individual's privacy and anonymity. Because of this anonymity, subjects become willing to speak in an open objective manner.

McCracken (1988) identifies six basic steps for the long interview process: (1) Develop a clear question that the study will attempt to answer; (2) Review the academic literature related to the topic; (3) Design an open-ended questionnaire related to the question; (4) Conduct interviews with selected teachers; (5) Analyze the data obtained during the interviews; and (6) Write up the results of the study (p. 5).

Van Manen's (1990) techniques are utilized to examine how good middle level social studies educators experience their world from a phenomenological point of view. It is through my reflections that I add descriptive dialogue in the presentation of the data.

The questionnaire is the main research instrument for the long interview, and the questions must be clear and understandable. The questions are open-ended, leaving the subjects free to expand their responses. The questionnaire, Appendix B, used in this study was developed after the initial review of the literature.

In addition to providing meaningful information, the literature review in Chapter Two was beneficial in generating ideas for questions for the long interviews and providing probes of inquiry for the interviewer to listen for during the interview processes. The literature also aids in categorizing the data into meaningful information.

The researcher continues to use the existing literature long after the interviews are conducted. The literature is continuously studied as the subjects introduce new ideas that might be overlooked in the initial literature review.

Part of the questionnaire should consist of biographical questions that serve two purposes; as a warm up to create trust between the interviewer and the respondent, and to gain biographical information used to compile the biographical sketches of the teachers interviewed. The most important part of the questionnaire should be comprised of open-ended questions that are used to probe into the minds of the good/effective teacher. Questions must be phrased in a general, non-directive way that will not lead the subject. The researcher must constantly be aware of facial expressions and gestures that could lead subjects into saying

what they think the interviewer wants to hear, rather than an honest reply.

During the interview process, the researcher must proceed cautiously and unobtrusively to avoid research bias. The researcher should not put words in the respondent's mouth and should repeat key words only if the subjects introduced them in the interview. It is essential to the project that the subject feels free to respond to the questions freely. This is one of the most critical aspects of the long interview used in a naturalistic study.

Using an emergent category designation method, the data are then organized into various categories. The researcher utilizes the five step process for organizing the data as suggested by Erlandson, et al. (1993):

- Read the first unit of data. Set it aside as the first entry in the first category.
- Read the second unit. If the content has the same tacit feel as the first unit, then add it to the same pile as the first. If not, then set it aside as the first entry in the second category.
- Proceed in this fashion until all units have been assigned to categories.
- Develop category titles or descriptive sentences of both that distinguish each category from the others.
- Start over. Use the cards or sheets bearing the title or descriptive sentence as markers for each category. Spread these out around the work area. Begin with the first card of the first category and repeat the process

that has already been followed. This important step enables the researcher to further focus on the content of each category (p. 118).

The syntax for questions and the manner in which they are presented are critical for obtaining quality data in a naturalistic study. Any question that leads the subject toward a desired response could contaminate the data, leading to research bias. The researcher must guarantee anonymity to each subject. Warm up questions, such as those used to gather biographical data, are used to put the respondent at ease (McCracken, 1988).

In order to obtain good, unbiased data, the interviewer must "play dumb" and appear totally ignorant of what good middle level social studies teachers do. For all practical purposes, the interviewer should remain totally unaware of how the subjects operate in their world.

The interviewer's role is not to inform the respondent, but to learn from the respondent. The interviewer simply seeks information and records that information using a tape recording device. The interviewer also takes notes that are useful when further probing is necessary. The interviewer must not criticize or agree with what is being said, either verbally or through his/her body language.

Listening is critical to the long interview process. McCracken (1988) notes that listening is difficult as it requires a great deal of concentration. The interviewer must never appear bored or anxious,

since this could destroy the trust that was created during the initial questioning.

### Research Process Used in the Study

The first step in the study was to submit a proposal to my dissertation committee and to the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board. This proposal consisted of three main sections: introduction, review of the literature, and methodology. A list of references that had been used for the review of the literature, the questionnaire, and consent form was also submitted for approval.

After the dissertation committee and the Institutional Review Board approved the project, subjects for the study were selected. Each subject was contacted by the researcher to select the interview time and place. None of the subjects recommended by teaching peers, students, parents, administrators or professors at Oklahoma State University, refused to be interviewed or participate in the study.

At each interview session, the respondent was given the consent form, Appendix D. The researcher explained the form, asked the respondent to read it and sign it if they approved. A copy of the signed document was left with each respondent.

All interviews were conducted using an audio tape recorder device. After the interviews were completed, they were transcribed from audio tape to computer by a transcriber. The transcripts were

transcribed verbatim, then the researcher checked the transcript with the audio tape to ensure the transcript was completely accurate. After the audio tapes were transcribed, the tapes and data were given to the head of the dissertation committee in order to provide an audit trail. After his review of the audio tapes, the tapes were destroyed as required by Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board.

The researcher went through the process of breaking down the data into various categories that were mentioned in the interviews then writing each category on a 3" x 5" note card. Over one hundred different categories were identified, these were listed on paper and submitted to the head of my dissertation committee for approval and verification. The head of the committee reviewed the data and listing of categories to ensure that no category was omitted.

The data on the note cards were organized, analyzed then subsumed into three major themes: incompetent, average, or good middle level social studies teachers. These were the major themes that emerged as a result the the questionnaire and literature review. The good teacher traits were described by the teachers interviewed and were broken down and organized into the following categories: characteristics, methodologies, relationships, middle school/junior characteristics, philosophy, and psychology, teacher values and moral/social concepts, and curriculum/evaluation. These basic themes emerged from the interview data.

After the data were organized, it was then analyzed and put in written form using quotes from the subjects as the body for the presentation of data. The data were then analyzed comparing and contrasting the subjects' responses with the existing literature and comparing the subjects' responses with each other.

What is it like to be an effective middle level social studies teacher? What do these teachers do that makes them stand out and be recognized as pedagogues? Naturalistic research asks such questions, and the researcher serves as the primary instrument for gathering the data. There is no null hypothesis in this method of research, and certainly this type of research cannot be compared or evaluated in the same manner as quantitative research. This study cannot be replicated; as that is not the purpose of naturalistic inquiry, no two researchers would be using the exact same subjects or the same questions. This study did not seek to prove or disprove any theory; it sought to add to any existing literature on the effective middle level social studies teacher. There are many ways to describe what one sees when looking through a kaleidoscope, no two people see the same blend of shapes and colors; even the slightest movement of the kaleidoscope will change the mirrored fragments. The same is true of qualitative research, and it is with this in mind that I will describe the good middle level social studies teacher.

## The Researcher

Since this is a qualitative study, it is necessary to establish the expertise and reveal the bias of the researcher. The reader will then be able to understand what I see when I look into the kaleidoscope of the middle level social studies educator.

All of my public school experience has been at the junior high and middle school levels. Even though I am a speech/drama teacher, there have been few times in my twelve years of teaching at the middle level that I have not taught social studies. This past year I have taught the gifted and talented classes at a middle school in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I have always taught these classes from a social studies approach, using not only the subject matter, but also the methodologies that are conducive to the subject. Cooperative learning, inquiry, research skills, mock trials and simulations, and hands-on projects are my main teaching methodologies. I constantly stress the importance of citizenship and the values of honesty and integrity in my teaching and believe in teaching students the perils of racism, hate, and various other social and moral issues that plague our society today. It is important to me to teach with an open mind, and my students know they can express themselves without fear of reprimand. I teach the First Amendment rights and want my students to know and understand these rights, and the responsibilities that accompany these rights, stressing that they have rights as long as they do not infringe upon the rights of others. My

approach to teaching, whether it be social studies, speech/drama, or gifted and talented, is through discovery and enrichment.

For the past four years I have pursued a Doctorate of Education Degree while teaching full time. Additionally, I have kept up with my professional organizations and my teaching obligations in order that my students received the same quality of education as those who I taught before I began my post-graduate studies. My regard for democracy, good citizenship, and good moral and social values through the study of social studies led me to this project.

#### Demographics of Teachers Used in the Study

Eight educators were chosen for this project, three women and five men. All are veteran teachers with at least five years teaching experience. Two of the educators represented the two largest school districts in the state, Tulsa and Oklahoma City, each with populations over 500,000 and school districts of more than 45,000 students; two were from towns with populations of approximately 35,000 and school districts of 3,500; two were from a city with a population of approximately 60,000 and a school district population of 14,000. One was from a smaller town with a population of 18,500 and a school district population of 1400. The eighth educator lived in one of the two larger cities, but was no longer a teacher. All subjects were white, six of the subjects had master's degrees and one had a

doctorate. All of the subjects were married or had been married, and all but one had children.

### Selection of Subjects

What constitutes a good or competent social studies teachers at the middle level? Everyone has different criteria for evaluation, based on his/her own frame of reference. The teachers chosen for this study were recommended six months prior to their selection by peers, students, parents, administrators, and education professors at Oklahoma State University. The teachers were all certified to teach social studies in the middle grades in Oklahoma.

A brief biographical sketch of each teacher is presented and includes a statement of why and by whom they were recommended for this study. The names were changed to names of states to guarantee the anonymity of each subject.

### Presentation of Subjects

Colorado has taught social studies in a medium sized school district for twenty years, currently teaching eighth grade social studies. Her mother was an educator and her father was a petroleum engineer. She is married and has one grown daughter and a son in high school. Colorado has a bachelor's degree in education from Oklahoma State University and master's degree in public school administration from Northeastern State University. She has received

numerous teaching awards in her community and at the state level. She has also been selected to attend various workshops and seminars throughout the state and the country. She was recommended by peers and parents as an outstanding social studies educator.

Arkansas has taught for ten years at the same junior high school in a medium sized community. His father was in the military and, as a result of that, Arkansas has traveled all over the world. He is married and has two young children. His wife is an educator at the elementary level. Currently, Arkansas is in an administrative/teacher capacity in charge of the in-house suspension program; he taught eighth and ninth social studies prior to that assignment. He earned his bachelor's degree in social studies education from Oklahoma State University and has a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from Oklahoma State University. Arkansas has been selected by his peers as the outstanding teacher in his building and received the teacher of the year award for his school district. He was recommended for this project by a former professor at Oklahoma State University.

Oklahoma teaches in one of Oklahoma's larger school districts. He has taught social studies at the middle level for twenty-three years, primarily in the eighth grade. Both his bachelor's and master's degrees are in history and social studies education from Oklahoma City University; he also has completed the class work at Oklahoma University for his doctorate, lacking only his dissertation. His father was a welder, and his mother worked in the school cafeteria when he

was growing up. He has been chosen to attend various state and national workshops. He is married and has one daughter. Oklahoma has presented papers at several conventions and conferences. He was recommended by the head of the Law Related Education Program of the Oklahoma Bar Association.

Texas has been teaching since 1975. She has taught school in Texas and at a community college in Oklahoma. She is currently teaching sixth grade at a middle school in one of Oklahoma's largest school districts. Her father was a fireman and owned a small business; her mother worked in retail. She has one younger sister who is also a school teacher. She is married and has two children, one who is in the navy, the other in high school. Texas holds a bachelor's degree in education from North Texas State and master's degree in education and early child development from the University of Texas. She recently completed the requirements for her doctorate in education in curriculum and instruction from Oklahoma State University. Texas has received a number of teaching awards for her excellent teaching, and has been selected for several national teacher workshops. She was recommended by peers and administrators as an effective middle school teacher.

California has fourteen years teaching experience at both the elementary and middle school level. She currently teaches a combination of sixth grade reading and social studies in middle school in one of the larger medium sized districts. Her father was an engineer, and her mother did not work outside the home. She is a

single parent raising two children. California has a bachelor's degree from elementary education and early childhood development from Oklahoma State University. At present she does not hold an advanced degree but plans to pursue this as soon as her children are older. California was recommended by her former administrator as an outstanding educator.

West Virginia has just completed his nineteenth year of teaching. He has taught in a junior high in a large metropolitan area and currently teaches eighth grade geography and economics at a middle school in a small community. His father was a coal miner before moving to Oklahoma. He is married and has two daughters in high school. He has a bachelor's degree in social studies education from Northeastern State University and a master's degree in education from Oklahoma State University. He has been selected for many state and national workshops. In addition to attending workshops, West Virginia makes presentations on his outstanding lesson plans for various school systems in and out of the state of Oklahoma. He was recommended by peers and students and a former principal for this project.

Florida has been teaching in a middle sized school district for sixteen years. He has a bachelor's degree in elementary education and two master's degrees, one in curriculum and one in counseling; all of his degrees were earned at Oklahoma State University. He currently teaches eighth and ninth grade social studies, gifted and talented, and coaches basketball at the junior high where he is

employed. Florida is divorced and has no children. He was voted by his peers as teacher of the year in his building and has most recently been selected to attend the Williamsburg Institute in Williamsburg, Virginia. He was recommended for this project by a professor at Oklahoma State University.

Arizona is a former middle school educator who now works in conjunction with the State Department of Education. He has received many state and national honors and teaching awards. In his current position he travels throughout Oklahoma and the United States presenting workshops and working with teachers in an advisory capacity. He has a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Central Oklahoma. He began his master's work at the University of New Mexico in secondary education with emphasis on middle school education, finishing that degree at the University of Central Oklahoma. He is married and has one daughter. Two of the middle school teachers who were interviewed for this project recommended Arizona for this project.

While the teachers interviewed were from various sized school districts, this was not a factor in this study, nor did it prove to be one. However a difference between the middle school and junior high school approach was noticed. Sex, race, and age were not factors used in this study. When seeking suggestions for subjects, I specified only that I wanted to interview good, middle level social studies teachers with at least five years teaching experience. After I was given the names, I randomly selected seven persons, telephoned

these subjects and asked for an interview. Two of the subjects suggested I interview USA because of his work with middle level social studies teachers in Oklahoma. Since USA is no longer in the classroom, a different questionnaire was used (Appendix C).

In summary, the teachers interviewed had a combined total of one-hundred-twenty-seven years experience in the classroom. All had advanced degrees except one person. One person had two masters degrees, one person had a doctorate, and another person had completed all requirements for a doctorate except writing his dissertation. Six of the eight teachers interviewed were married and had families, all of these placed family as the number one priority in their lives. All of the teachers were active outside the classroom, involved with professional organizations and attending workshops, seminars, or presenting information at these different meetings.

## CHAPTER IV PRESENTATION OF DATA

This chapter presents the data obtained during the long interviews. The data are presented in three sections: the incompetent, average, and good middle level social studies teachers. More data are presented for the good/effective teacher than the incompetent and average teacher because this research was to discover the teaching characteristics and methodologies of good middle level social studies teachers. The definitions of the good middle level social studies teacher, provided by the subjects from the long interviews, are purely subjective; therefore, the data on the incompetent and average middle level social studies teachers are included only to serve as a point of reference in analyzing the data to discover the characteristics of good middle level social studies teachers

### The Incompetent Middle Level Social Studies Teacher

Every profession, from lawyers to doctors to accountants, is burdened with incompetent workers, and the field of education certainly has its' share. Incompetent teachers are rare, but according to Bridges (1986), "If we assume that five percent of the teachers in public elementary and secondary schools are incompetent (Johnson, 1984; Neill and Custis, 1978), then the number of students who are

being taught by these teachers exceeds the total combined public school enrollments of fourteen states; Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming" (p. 2). Five percent seems like a small amount, but when Briggs' translates the five percent into understandable figures, the amount is staggering. It is safe to say that a large number of our nation's children are being cheated out of a quality education. Fortunately, children for the most part, are resilient and can bounce back if no permanent damage is done. Because the effects of social studies are often not internalized until later in life, the incompetent middle level social studies teacher can cause students to develop a great dislike for various social studies courses, possibly affecting the development of moral and social values in young adolescents.

Briggs (1986) describes six characteristics of the incompetent teacher:

- Failure to maintain discipline.
- Failure to treat students properly.
- Failure to impart subject matter effectively.
- Failure to accept teaching advice from superiors.
- Failure to demonstrate mastery of the subject matter being taught.
- Failure to produce the intended or desired results in the classroom (p. 3).

The teachers interviewed in this study placed incompetent teachers in three main categories: the teacher who does not care for the students, the teacher who lacks the knowledge, teaching skills and psychology of middle school students, and the incompetent teacher who either has too much or not enough control.

I think an incompetent teacher is someone who doesn't have a good grasp of the subject matter, I think that teaching is really a skill. You can go into a classroom, say a social studies classroom, and not really know the subject matter, but if you know good teaching techniques and good teaching strategies, you can develop an excellent program working with the students to discover. So I guess the difference between a good teacher and a bad one, bad teachers are too fact oriented, they want you to memorize facts (Texas, pp. 5-6).

Some social studies teachers just want students to memorize facts. This is one of the problems of social studies education and one of the reasons why so many students are not fond of these classes. West Virginia describes two types of incompetent social studies teachers:

I see incompetent teachers and I see two different types of incompetent teachers: I see an incompetent teacher as the incompetent teacher that I really I hope I never see. I think I've seen a few, who just come to school to draw their paycheck. They want their kids in their places and they want their mouths shut, they don't want any problems and their philosophy is, 'if you stay quiet and you close your mouth you won't get homework, if you give me any difficulty I'm sending you to the office immediate-

ly.' This teacher definitely is incompetent, definitely doesn't care, definitely wants to draw the pay. So there's my limited view, I see two different types of incompetencies, those who are incompetent because they don't really have the perspicaciousness or grasp of the subject itself, or they really don't care ( p. 10).

The bad social studies teacher is capable of turning off students to the areas of social studies courses forever. Students often have a difficult time sorting out whether their dislike is for the subject or for the bad or incompetent teacher:

I walk down the street and I meet somebody new and they say, 'what do you teach?' I say, 'geography,' and they look at me and say, 'God, I hated that subject, that was the worst subject in the world, man, how can you stand that? Boy, I had the world's worst teacher.' My heart goes out to this guy because I hear it all the time, I hear it all the time! When to me geography ought to be the most exciting class in the building. It ought to be the ones the kids are wanting to pile into, even more than art or P.E. (West Virginia, p. 28).

In addition to just sitting at a desk and drawing a paycheck, some incompetent teachers' main objective is to keep the students quiet and in their seats. These teachers often think they are effective if their students are absolutely quiet; they equate their effectiveness on being able to control the class:

I know people that are there to earn a check. I mean, I've taught with teachers who are paper pushers, that hand out worksheets because that keeps the kids quiet and keeps them busy; keeps them out of their hair and they feel like, I guess, they've fulfilled their task. I've seen ones that have shown films three and four days a week. I think the competent teacher is the one

that the kids know that their education wouldn't be near as strong if it was a different person in front of the classroom (Florida, p. 6).

On the other hand an incompetent teacher can be someone who simply cannot maintain discipline in the class. This teacher lets the kids run around the room, write on the boards and basically allows utter chaos to occur. The students who are trying to do the worksheets or questions at the back of the chapter, find the task of learning next to impossible because of the commotion caused by the other students.

Arkansas describes the incompetent teacher as one who just baby-sits the class:

Someone who doesn't even have an understanding of the basic idea of what social studies is about, someone who basically feels they're a baby-sitter and not a teacher. Coaches get a bad rap, and I hate to stick coaches with that, but there are coaches who are basically there just as baby-sitters, they see their real job as coaches. [This person is] somebody who brings very little into a child's life, or a student's life (Arkansas, pp. 4,5).

California agrees with Arkansas, adding:

A poor and incompetent social studies teacher is not knowledgeable of the subject matter. [S]/he'll go in with the teacher's manual and [s]/he'll give the work. His/[Her] main goal is to keep the kids busy and not have to interact that much with the children. That's the difference right there, it's interacting with the students constantly (p. 6).

Another type of incompetent teacher is one who really does not care about his/her students, either personally or academically:

Poor teachers in middle school probably don't think a whole lot about students at all, they either concentrate on subject matter or test scores or some other aspect of their job and probably have the least affect on their students. It really doesn't matter that the students don't acquire skills, social or learning skills (Oklahoma, p. 10).

Arizona, who travels throughout the state working with social studies teachers at the middle level, believes there are many incompetent teachers. He sees the incompetent teacher as being knowledgeable in the subject matter, but lacking pedagogical skills:

There are so many of them [incompetent teachers] out there unfortunately. The incompetent, really the incompetent one, is the one that has the subject matter but has no idea of who they're teaching or what they're teaching. An incompetent middle school teacher is one who says, often, this could be any incompetent teacher, but it's the teacher who goes in and says, 'I'm going to present the material. It is my job to present the material, and it's my job to present it so you can learn it. I'm going to do my job, if they [students] don't do their jobs, it's tough, I don't care' (Arizona, p. 9).

The teachers interviewed were asked to compare an incompetent middle level social studies teacher with a good one; however, some of the teachers interviewed talked about incompetency in all areas of teaching. Their responses are included

since incompetency affects all students, all grade levels, and the teaching profession as a whole.

All of the subjects felt that the basic trait of the incompetent teacher was that they did not care about the students. This is the dominant theme of what these good educators believe to be the main characteristic of incompetent teachers. Another significant characteristic is lack of knowledge in the subject matter and teaching skills. Frequently, teachers who teach social studies are there because an administrator needs a warm body for a teaching assignment:

I see an incompetent teacher as one who simply happens to be a piece of meat. The administration said, 'Look, you happen to have a certificate in social studies, we want you to go over and teach geography' (West Virginia, p. 10).

School administrators need to be held accountable if they are going to place unqualified teachers in classrooms. When I first began my teaching career, I had to teach two sections of English. This was a terrible injustice to the students because I was uncomfortable with the subject, and I was not competent in the methodology of the subject. I spent a great deal of time trying to stay one day ahead of my students, and often there were times when I was only one hour ahead of them. I should not have been teaching English, but the administration did not care; "Oh, you can do it," was the standard reply when I pleaded and said, "I am NOT qualified to teach this subject." I know administrators sometimes get in binds when they have to use a warm body to teach a class; this not only hurts the

students, it also hurts the teaching profession. I personally believe that administrators are often the cause of many incompetent teachers being in the classroom. In addition to placing unqualified teachers in a class, they often do not know what is going on in that teacher's classroom or whether the teacher is doing an adequate job:

I believe administrators have jelly for bones when it comes to dismissing teachers. By God if there's a bad teacher they ought to have guts enough to fire their butt or remediate them or find a way to put them where they belong. I think kids can be hurt by incompetency (West Virginia, p. 28).

I've gone to my principal several times in the past, not several times, I think three or four times in the past, to make him aware of teachers in our building who I don't think are effective and you know, it's ended up, they've ended up getting rid of them. But usually it takes somebody pointing it out, because administrators aren't in the classroom, aren't familiar with what's going on in the classrooms, and I think part of being a good teacher is being concerned about the profession itself. I think that I'm not only evaluated by what I do, but I'm also being evaluated by what the people around me do. And I love them and I'll help them anyway I can, but if they don't care about education, then they shouldn't be in the classroom ( Florida, p. 22).

Florida strongly believes that in addition to the students, teachers have a responsibility to their profession. Briggs (1986) agrees with Florida that students and parents are not the only ones who are being shortchanged by incompetent teachers; "These poor

performers tarnish the vast majority of America's teachers who are competent and conscientious professionals" (p. 3).

All of the educators interviewed for this project held strong convictions about teaching as a profession. This type teacher has no qualms about discussing an incompetent teacher with an administrator, not as a "tattle tale," but as a professional worried about the welfare of the students and the profession in which they share:

I felt awful [going to an administrator about an incompetent teacher]. You know, I mean, I remember one teacher, I went down and said [to the principal], 'You know the kids play poker in this person's class everyday?' And he said, 'Oh really?' And I said, 'Yes, they really do.' You know, she gets up there and teaches and tells the ones that are not interested that they can go to the back of the room and play cards, so they go to the back room and play poker. And I just don't think eighth graders have the maturity to make that decision. I mean, it was a friend of mine and she ended up taking early retirement. Maybe she was burned out, I mean it's real possible. The teacher who showed films four days a week, it took a couple of us going in and saying, 'Hey, listen, this person isn't teaching, they're just standing in front of the class'... not even standing in front of the classroom, he was sitting at his desk. And you don't like to do that, but I also was hearing it from other buildings, they were going, 'I hear you don't have a good faculty at the junior high.' We do have a good faculty, you know, you're hearing about a couple of bad apples. I don't know, you never feel comfortable in that position, I'm sure it's the way the principal feels which is probably the reason they

don't make those decisions very often (Florida, p. 23).

Many good teachers will try to offer some advice or help and do everything possible to assist the incompetent teacher before seeking help from the administration:

I've often [said], 'here's my lesson plan, see what we're doing, this is easy to do, do this, you might try this,' and of course, that's treading on thin water, skating a little bit because you don't want to insult the other individual (Colorado, pp. 6-7).

How do the incompetent teachers slip through the cracks? Often their incompetencies are not detected for years, as often administrators are rarely in the classrooms observing the teachers. In addition, many administrators do not want to bother with the documentation that is necessary to discharge an incompetent teacher. This is a long, drawn out process that often ends up costing the school districts thousands of dollars, and since only two states, Alaska and Tennessee, have attempted to define incompetence in its state legislatures, it is often a process that many school districts and administrators would rather not deal with. But the true pedagogue, such as the subjects interviewed for this research, cares enough for the children to try to do something about incompetent teachers in their buildings. These are the educators who are concerned with both the welfare of the children and the profession of education.

Although I did not formally interview students, I did ask some of my students and former students about incompetent teachers they

have experienced. One student, who is now in college, told me about a social studies teacher she had in the sixth grade whom she felt was incompetent at the time she had her. She said that she wished she had had this teacher in high school, because when she had her in sixth grade she felt that most of the things the teacher talked about were too abstract; had she had this teacher in high school she felt she would have really connected with her. This type of incompetency corresponds with Piaget's operational developmental stages. Most sixth graders are still at the concrete operational stage of development, making it almost impossible to understand abstract thinking of the formal operational stage. The teacher previously mentioned was viewed as incompetent, not because she did not have the teaching skills or subject matter knowledge, but because she was teaching at the wrong grade level. Many middle school teachers are not qualified to teach middle school and many would rather be teaching in elementary or high school. Often they have to remain at the middle level, not getting through to students because they have not been properly trained to teach that grade level.

### Summary

The literature from Briggs (1986) indicated that the number of incompetent teachers is a relatively small percentage. However, the small percentage translates to a large number of children, and we

may not know the long term effects these teachers have until it is too late.

Three major categories of incompetent teachers defined by the teachers interviewed were: the incompetent teacher who does not care about the children, and may even cause damage to the children; the incompetent teacher who lacks subject matter knowledge, teaching skills, and psychology for middle school; and the incompetent teacher who has either no control or too much control over the class.

The incompetent teacher can actually harm the student in such a way that they cause the students to become disinterested or regress in school. If the principals, superintendents, and school boards were to be held accountable for incompetent middle level social studies teachers, there probably would be fewer coaches and unqualified social studies teachers in the classroom today.

### The Average Middle Level Social Studies Teacher

The subjects were asked to compare the average middle level social studies teacher with the good one. Most of the teachers interviewed did this in the context of the social studies area. However, like the responses of the incompetent teachers, the replies were often generalized. The average middle level social studies teacher is the one that is most common in the public schools today;

however, little research exists on this type teacher. The average teacher is best defined as the typical teacher who usually follows the traditional paradigm of teaching providing students with the appropriate subject knowledge. Delso's (1993) qualitative research agrees that the average teacher is competent and primarily uses direct teaching methods.

The average teacher is more likely to treat the students as a group, ignoring the individuality of the students. These teachers teach the curriculum as required by the school district and usually rely on the textbook as the primary source of instruction. The average teacher utilizes the teachers' handbooks to a large extent, varying their methodology very little. In speaking of the average teachers, Delso (1993) says, "They desire and work to achieve an automated routine in their teaching practice that is relatively easy to administer and maintain once it is established" (p. 100). California defines the average middle level social studies teacher as one who:

... will bring his/her textbook in, s/he'll know what s/he's doing, s/he knows [his]/her material and s/he'll bring it in and s/he'll go over the chapter and ask the questions and she'll go over the vocabulary and s/he'll give worksheets and give a test and go on to the next [chapter]. S/he might throw in a film here or there (p. 5).

Texas also sees the average teacher as one who basically covers the material using the textbook:

An [average] social studies teacher covers the material that is in the book and is very text-

book oriented. An excellent teacher uses the book as their block plan and starts teaching from there. If you use your textbook as your primary resource, then you're border lining getting into trouble (p. 5).

The average social studies teacher at the middle level is the teacher who is least likely to change and does not want to be told how to do his/her job. This teacher is satisfied with the *status quo* and is not interested in new methodologies or teaching techniques. Foucault (1980) found that there was power in maintaining the *status quo*. By keeping things *as is* the average teacher does not have to learn new methodologies or improve his/her teaching skills. Many coaches who teach social studies fall into the average or mediocre category of teachers; and many are primarily interested in coaching but have to teach a couple of classes (often social studies courses). Most are not interested in improving their teaching techniques, thus the *status quo* prevails and the traditional, routine teacher paradigm remains the standard for teaching social studies.

The average teacher is the one that uses a lot of hand outs or shows a lot of films as his/her primary method of teaching. West Virginia believes the average teacher is just as bad as the incompetent teacher. He has defined two main types of average middle level social studies teachers:

There are two types of average teachers, the Cranks and the Coppolas. The Cranks, those are the teachers who are everyday waiting to get to the mimeograph machine so they can crank out the hand-out sheet. The Coppolas are those teachers like Francis Ford Coppola, they show a movie about every other

day (p. 8).

I think you see even more teachers who are working not to be good teachers, because if you are going to be a Crank or a Coppola, I mean, you've got to really figure out a way to duck around trying to be a good teacher (18).

It would be okay if they [average teachers] showed the movie and had the kids interact to the movie or did something as a lesson plan, but what I see is this, 'Here's a movie on something. We're going to watch it and I want you to take notes,' and then there's nothing, there's no follow up ( p. 9).

Arizona believes the average teacher is the typical teacher, the one seen most often in the classroom.

If you mean average as the teacher that is most common out there, I think we're talking about a junior high teacher, a high school teacher that's teaching younger kids. That would be average (5).

He further adds:

I think your average middle school teacher is going to be someone who's dedication is average. I think your average middle school teacher is going to be someone who's concern for the kids is average. I think you can use that term average on just about every aspect of it, when you talk about average teachers (p. 8).

Florida defines the average teacher as one who is doing a basic "eight to five" job.

I think an average person [teacher] as a person who completes the task required, the good one

goes beyond, you know, you go on field trips, you don't mind taking time out of your evenings, weekend, whatever to get things done. I mean, you don't, you can't be a good teacher between eight and three, it's impossible. I think there are a lot of people that believe their jobs are between eight and three or eight to four or whatever, whenever the bell rings, they're through for the day (p.6).

There are days, however, when even the good teacher has to use handouts, has to rely on the textbook and have the students answer the questions at the end of the book. But the good teacher does this only occasionally, whereas the average teacher uses this teaching method most of the time:

Adequate, average, is take the book, follow it through. Take the curriculum guide that they send with the books. Run it on, you know, straight down the line, which is okay, I mean there have been times in my life when I've had to do that... physical reasons, home, whatever, and that's wonderful, I'm glad I had all those sources, but that's average to me. To jump from that to other projects and other interesting things is what I think the difference between a good teacher and an average one (Colorado, p. 6).

Arkansas agrees with Delso (1993) and sees the average teacher as one who has a fixed routine. This teacher is predictable and the students know exactly what will happen each day as they enter the class. There's no spontaneity, no throwing out the curriculum in favor of a current event. They just have a set routine and stick with it. Arkansas also equates average teaching with bad teaching:

An average one comes to class, seems like they're going through the paces, average and bad to me is the same thing. You know, it's you either need to be good at what you do or don't do it at all. It looks like they're going through the same paces all the time. Somebody who hits one chapter a week. There's a consistent rhythm to their program, their curriculum, you do worksheets on Monday, reading on Tuesday and Wednesday, test on Thursday or Friday and quizzes... and it's just monotonous, repetitive, boring and dull (p. 4).

### Summary

Little data exists on the average teacher. The good middle level social studies educators used in this study described two basic types of average teachers. The first type is one who does his/her job by imparting the subject matter to his/her students in a traditional manner using the curriculum guidelines and teacher manuals and workbooks, the second type is the average teacher who does his/her job between eight and three (or four) following a set routine.

West Virginia and Arkansas both felt that the average middle level social studies teachers were almost as bad as the incompetent teachers. Arkansas felt that teachers were either good or not, there was no in-between. West Virginia described the average teacher as either a Crank or Coppola; the Crank gives out the daily worksheets while the Coppola shows films regularly. The other teachers interviewed felt that the average teacher did impart the subject knowledge, but did not do it in a manner using good teaching skills

or tools. None of the teachers interviewed indicated that the average teachers were harmful to the students.

Arkansas defined the average social studies teacher at the middle level as one who has a set routine. This is the type average teacher that I encounter most in my middle school setting. This is the teacher that never takes a risk; and I believe risk taking is an essential part of being a good or effective teacher, especially teaching social studies to middle level students.

### The Good Middle Level Social Studies Teacher

This section presents the data on the good middle level social studies teacher as identified by the subjects used in this study. This section will examine the good middle level social studies teacher in terms of characteristics, methodology, relationships, middle school/junior characteristics, philosophies, psychologies, teacher values and moral/social issues, and curriculum/evaluation.

Arizona uses a metaphor to describe the difference between the good and poor middle level teacher:

We don't have enough high expectations. An outstanding middle school teacher is a rider on a horse, you let a horse go, you let a horse fly across the prairie, your only job is to keep that horse under control. If it's beginning to stumble, you need to slow up a little, if it begins to turn one way or the other in the direction that the horse shouldn't be going, then you use your reign to guide it. You don't put the horse on your back and carry it, you help

the horse, you guide it. And I think that's what a good middle school teacher is. Your poor teachers, you know, limit the kids by their low expectations of kids. And they keep those reins pulled in all the time as a rider on a horse, they never give the horse their own hand to see where that horse is going to go. They don't direct, they grab the horse by the tail and pull the horse backwards often times, and that's the difference between your lower teachers and your good teachers (Arkansas, p. 10).

Oklahoma generalizes the good teacher as one who "becomes," one who is constantly changing to adjust to the student. The good teacher does not make the students adjust to him/her, the good teacher is the one who adjusts and who knows whether or not the students are learning the material and achieving:

A good teacher evolves, they don't make wholesale changes and I don't think that all teachers evolve in the same way. Some teachers evolve because of contact with students, not because of contact with the profession (8).

It's kind of a John Dewey concept. It's constant, kind of a constant reconstruction of what you believe, in a pragmatic and philosophical sense. And what you know right now is good and the right thing to do in teaching, but may or may not be true next year. That each time you get a new group of students then you have to be ready to change what you think, or your approach, or your goals, sometimes all of those things, in order to meet the needs of that new group. And I think the best teachers are those that do that, who change themselves to meet the situation instead of trying to mold the students into their methods (p.12).

I think the best teachers try to include all of the aspects that I mentioned, they look at the subject matter that they're dealing with and the achievement levels of students based on acquiring information from the subject (p. 5).

Good teachers are teachers that students can trust, the teacher that can help them as they enter into and emerge from those bitter-sweet years of adolescence. The middle level is difficult on everyone, and it takes a very special person to teach this age group; and an even more special person to succeed:

First a person has to be a middle school teacher and a social studies teacher second. Because first you teach kids, and then you teach a subject. I think that's the real difference between a good middle school teacher and what may be called a 'typical,' although not be the best, but a typical junior high teacher (Arizona, p. 1).

While it is clear there is no stereotypical good middle level social studies teacher, there are definite characteristics that the good teachers do have in common and that they believe good teachers possess. A further review of the data will be useful in finding the similarities and differences through the eyes of the teachers interviewed.

## Characteristics

This section divides the good teacher characteristics into two categories: the first section discusses the acquired characteristics, and the second section discusses the innate characteristics of the good middle level social studies teacher. The good middle level social studies teacher goes far beyond the average, incompetent or poor teacher. There are certain characteristics, both innate and acquired, that make these teachers successful in the classroom.

### Acquired Characteristics

Many people believe that good teachers are born, not made. However, Texas, an excellent example of the good middle level social studies teacher, believes that while there are certain innate characteristics that go into making a good teacher, certain skills must be learned:

I've always said that I was born to be a teacher. But just because I had the temperament and the desire to be a teacher doesn't mean that I was always, I could always be an effective teacher. I think that to be an effective teacher, those skills are learned. The teaching methodology, that's learned. The psychology of working with students, that's learned. That's why I'm always going to school, to learn something else, another technique that I can use. It's a skill, it can be learned, but it also takes a lot of practice, and you have to keep up with it everyday. You don't ever learn it all. You just have to keep working at it and keep learning new things. If I were teaching today with the teaching techniques that I started with in 1975, I would be pretty ineffective, even though I was effective in 1975. So it's learned,

and there's nothing like an experienced teacher that has kept up with his or her field. That's what they need to relay to the school board. I was a good teacher in 1975, but I didn't hold a candle to myself now, from what I am now, that where I am today was a long process of going to school, continually educating myself and in the classroom experience. You cannot touch an experienced teacher who has kept up. They're flexible, they know more, they've seen so much more. A lot of what I see in the classroom I've seen before and I just keep upgrading my skills where I made a mistake last time, I keep improving and that sort of thing. You just can't beat a teacher who's made it (Texas, pp. 18-19).

Oklahoma agrees with Texas somewhat and describes teaching as a craft:

It seems to me like, there are possibilities for teaching, there are a certain number of things that anybody can be taught to do as a teacher. And there are certain aspects of teaching that lend themselves quite well to that type of development. I would call that a teaching craft, those are the kinds of things that can be replacated by almost anybody, with given ability (p. 11).

Most of the teachers interviewed felt that the good middle level social studies teacher is one who has a great concern and care for his/her students:

Oh I don't think there's a cookie cutter mold of a good teacher. I've seen teachers that are real firm and are very effective in their classrooms, I've seen ones that are real unstructured. I think the common link might be that you care

about kids and whether they succeed or not. They [middle level students] can tell how you feel, whether you like your job or not. And I think that's the reason I've always thought... I've not had any troubles because the kids know I like my job and I like doing it, and I enjoy it (Florida, p. 5).

The good teacher is also a teacher that is very dedicated and very committed to his/her job:

[Good middle level social studies teachers] throw out the curriculum and develop new curriculum. Get a newspaper. I guess be willing to do-- social studies can be very boring if you're not, if you just leave the text the way it is. You have to look for other options. I call these options projects, for lack of another word, to develop the curriculum to tantalize the student, to create his imagination, and then all of the sudden it [social studies] becomes a living thing. A lot of teachers don't do that. They don't want to go outside the classroom for other options and they're content. I'm so committed (Colorado, pp. 4-5).

The good middle level social studies teacher is continually learning, not only gaining new knowledge, but learning new effective teaching strategies and techniques. These effective teachers are constantly attending workshops and in-service programs, going to school and reading; basically they are learning and seeking new knowledge at all times. Their education did not end the day they received their diplomas. They believe that for the teacher, learning is a life long process, not just a one-shot event.

Many teachers attend summer workshops and institutes that not only add to their knowledge base, but also gives them the opportunity to meet other dedicated and effective educators:

I've done some work with a couple of different institutes, not institutes, a couple of different organizations. The Center for Civic Education has gotten great material to me to use in my classroom. Discussion with other teachers, how they teach things, little things that they think are unique and different. I don't think, throughout the years and years of all history, that we can find out everything that's really interesting. So it's fun to talk to other people and see what they're found. But most of that occurs over lunch at some seminar or something, you're not getting much from the seminar, but you're getting some great stuff from the people you eat with at lunch (Arkansas, p. 9).

Colorado seeks new ways to get new ideas and keep current in her field:

I just attend everything I can. Actually I look at the point system [in-service] as a free avenue to increase my education at no cost. That's a bonus to my job, workshops and in-service and the cool, neat people that I meet, that's just a bonus. And if I miss something, I feel like I've really missed an opportunity, but you can't do it all. You have to find the right avenue (pp. 9, 12).

The best program I found is PACE [sponsored by the Oklahoma Bar Association] in the last couple of years. For the civics part, PACE, has been so generous, you know, they're passing out [materials] and I'm picking them up (pp. 10-11).

Florida was one of the few Oklahoma teachers selected to attend the Williamsburg Institute in Williamsburg, Virginia in the summer of 1994. The good teacher knows it is important to select workshops that will that will help him/her in the classroom:

I go to a couple of workshops a year on gifted.  
I attend a couple of social studies workshops.  
I usually try to go to at least one First Amendment Workshop. I've applied for the Williamsburg Institute this summer in Williamsburg, Virginia, and I've applied for a First Amendment Workshop in Valley Forge this summer, so you know, whatever I can find that I think will really benefit my curriculum. I mean if it isn't pretty direct to my curriculum, I don't participate in it. I've gone to four or five workshops dealing with economics because that used to be an area that I didn't feel very comfortable with, now it's something I enjoy doing (p. 24).

The good teachers do not mind taking the time to complete the paperwork and apply to workshops, such as the Williamsburg Institute; and they do not mind taking time from their summer vacation to attend these workshops. Good teachers take the time to learn, whether in a workshop, or attending classes at a college or university. Not only do they attend classes and workshops in the summer, many teachers go to school during the school year.

I go to school all the time. All the time. If I haven't taken a class in the last three years, I start getting real worried, so I go to school all the time (Texas, pp. 8-9).

To be a good teacher it is important to be a good student. The teacher who never attends classes, in-service or workshops, often

forgets what it is like to be a student, forgetting what it is like to be on the "other side" of the teacher's desk:

One of the things I try to do, I think, that makes me an effective teacher is I go to school. I know what it's like to sit in that seat, it gets pretty hard after a few hours. I know what it's like to sit there and be bored out of my mind, so I ask myself this question every day, 'would I like to have this crammed down my throat if I were in this classroom'? And if I can answer that question honestly, legitimately, and say, 'yeah, I think this is pretty neat or pretty interesting,' or 'I think it's not only neat or interesting, but it has to be taught,' then that's how I approach it (West Virginia, pp. 12-13).

While West Virginia advocates attending classes, he believes that some professors in higher education should put their theories of good classroom techniques into practice:

I stay current by going to school. Unfortunately, I find that in the higher education department, those people use... are very poor examples of... for training. Especially if you're in the education department getting a master's degree. They [education professors] are, they're pitiful. I don't think those people would know a good teacher if one walked up and presented themselves physically to them (p. 17).

Another way of keeping current is to attend the in-service programs that are usually offered by the school district. However, not all of these programs are beneficial and the good teacher knows the importance of selecting good in-service programs that will be beneficial to his/her curriculum and methodology. The good teachers

attends in-service programs, not because they need the staff development points, but because they believe they can gain from the experience:

I'm beginning to pull back from staff development because the staff development is not relevant. They [education service center] keep doing the same old things in the same old ways and some of the research has changed and the techniques have changed, and every once in a while, I'll see a really great title and I'll think, 'well, you know, that's something I need to know about.' So I will want to go to a workshop on that, and when I get there, I mean it's for a year-one teacher. So I'm really having some problems with staff development. So I get my information from some other place other than staff development (Texas, p. 9).

Texas goes on to discuss why some in-service programs are not helpful and certainly cannot be a "quick fix" for educators:

The problem I find is that teachers who have been in the field a long time, they don't stay up, and where they get their information, it's not good sources. I think where you get your information is important. Teachers that have been there a long time, who have gotten their information from current books, from going to Kappan meetings, and from going to classes, real courses, they're going to be superior to those long term teachers who have just gone to in-service, those little one hour, one time shots. In-service is a process, it's not an event. It's a process, it's another part of what's wrong with in-service. They treat it like it's a shot, like it's an event. If you really want to make changes it has to be a process. You don't change the way teachers have been doing things

for twenty years with a one hour workshop. It's a process you go through (p. 19-21).

The good middle level social studies teacher also keeps current by reading and keeping up with current events. All of the teachers interviewed were avid readers, and listed reading as one of their favorite pass times. Good social studies teachers do not rely solely on the textbook as their primary teaching source:

[I keep current by] reading, news, television. I love reading the paper. If I ever get a chance to travel, or get to a major airport, I like to pick up about five or six different papers, just to get different opinions. I have a new toy, which is America on Line, which is a modem service, which keeps me current on a lot of issues. If everybody could have one of these, social studies teachers in particular, we'd be in great shape, just because we could exchange ideas (Arkansas, p. 9).

Texas, who recently completed her doctorate in education also reads a lot:

I read several different kinds of things. I'm still reading things in my field in education, current books, the one I'm reading now is called *Future Schools* by Dixon, it's really a good book; so that type of material. Then material like *Kappan*, I read, *Leadership*, I like current magazines on education. And then I read, I try to bring in other things so I won't get burned out in one area (p. 16).

Oklahoma reads a lot of materials for research papers he writes:

I read a lot. I usually write a couple of papers a year. Sometimes I'll write for presentations; if I know there's something coming up, a call for papers, sometimes I'll submit an abstract and present papers. I do a lot of research; I like research (p. 7).

The good middle level social studies teacher not only feels an obligation to the children they teach, they also have a strong commitment to the entire education profession:

I don't know of a doctor who doesn't belong to the AMA, I don't know of a vet that doesn't belong to the American Veterinarian Association, I don't know of any professional that doesn't belong to their association, yet we have them right here in this building. As big as those organizations [OEA, NEA], are, sometimes I think they can get carried away; there's got to be a check and balance, and you bet I believe we ought to stand up as teachers in these assemblies, in our locals, at the national level, stand up and say, 'Wrong!' This is wrong. This agenda's wrong, we disagree. It's okay to disagree. You know if you go to the NEA convention, it's probably the world's greatest example of democracy in motion, cause you've got ten thousand delegates, and power is floating between different parts of the building. Some people accuse NEA of having hidden agendas. That's bologna! Everything, and I can tell you this for a fact, almost every issue that came from NEA as a resolution this year came from a teacher somewhere in some classroom. Whether it was in the sticks of upper Michigan, or whether it was in the inner-city of Los Angeles. So you bet, I'm a firm believer in belonging to the organization and striving to change or improve it (West Virginia, pp. 29-30).

Florida is also a strong believer that the good teacher cares about his/her profession:

I also think an effective teacher is one that is concerned with the profession as a whole, and not just what's in their classroom. I think that you have to show an interest where the profession is moving and I think the public schools are real important, and for a teacher in the classroom to not be familiar or take a stand on a issue, like vouchers, that has a potential to totally change the public school and re-establish racial discrimination and segregation in our schools, I think that's wrong. I don't think that you can have the ostrich syndrome and teach in the schools, you have to every once in a while take your head outside your door and see what's going on (Florida, p. 21).

All of the teachers interviewed belonged to their local organization, the OEA and NEA. Most of the teachers also belonged to various other groups, such as the National Council for the Social Studies, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Phi Beta Kappa, and various other professional organizations. Three of the subjects were on the board of directors for OEA and are delegates to the NEA conventions that are held each summer.

Several of the teachers interviewed have taken courses in order to obtain administrative certification; however, most have no desire to leave the classroom:

I've never applied [to be an administrator]. I got my master's degree and I thought with all the divergence of retiring administrators that it might be the thing to do, but then when it comes to do it, actually applying, I like the classroom. I

just like my kids (Colorado, pp. 3-4).

Florida has the certification to be an administrator, but this does not appeal to him at this time:

I have a provisional certificate in administration that I got the third year I taught because I thought that's probably where I would end up,;but I won't ever do it, I don't think. As long as the set up is the way it is currently, which is dealing with discipline and not dealing with what the school needs to be doing (p. 3).

Texas also has the qualifications and certifications, but says:

Even though I have all these administrator's certificates, and I have applied a time or two, I don't think I'll ever apply again to come out of the classroom. Because if you're really going to make a difference, it's going to be in the classroom (p. 10).

West Virginia agrees with the others:

I love the classroom and I see administrators as having to be the good guys or bad guys; being deans, dealing with a lot of parent problems, kid problems, and, sure, I deal with those too, but I want to work with kids. That's what I got into education for and so, although it may sound like I'm a martyr, I really think that's why I'm here, to teach kids (p. 5).

Arkansas, who is currently in a semi-administrative position, thinks it is a shame that good educators have to leave the classroom if they want to make a decent salary in education:

When I took this job there was a gentleman at the high school who left the classroom last year also, he was a great science teacher who took the in-school suspension job over there. There were a lot of people, three board members, who talked to both of us and said there was almost a denial of letting us out of our classroom positions to take these in-school positions. The board had to okay us and they told us that they really seriously thought about not okaying you two to leave the classroom, but we knew that you'd be good for those jobs. And I thought to myself, and then I went on to say, 'It's too bad that teachers have to leave the classroom for more money,' but those three people are in a situation where they could say, 'you know, we want you in the classroom bad enough to give you more money.' You know, they do that for the basketball coaches coming in. They gave this guy a ten thousand dollar raise to bring this one coach in, and I thought, ten thousand dollars for a coach who's going to influence maybe twenty-five people where I influence a hundred-fifty or a hundred thirty-five or forty a day. That's just disgusting! And I just lost complete respect for the people who made the decision and who could have made a different decision. And granted, I told them I'll do this [in-house suspension] but there are other people out there who, you know, it's a shame if you let them leave the classroom to get more money. It's a shame, but nobody's willing to do anything about it. I guess all of our kids will lose on that one, not just for me, but there are lots of other great people who have left the classroom (pp. 32-33).

### Innate Characteristics

The innate characteristics that teachers have are those that cannot be learned, as they are in-bred. These characteristics add a great deal to the effectiveness of the good middle level social studies

teacher. It is these innate characteristics that make good social studies teachers unique.

Effective middle school social studies teachers have a great deal of enthusiasm for what they do. These are the teachers who dare to be different, and do not conform. Maybe this is what makes these teachers effective--they dare to take risks, they are eclectic and often even a little eccentric.

Most of the teachers I talked with were very personable, had good people skills, and after visiting with them for just a few minutes, I felt very comfortable with them. Being able to get along with kids is a tremendous innate characteristic, and a tremendous asset for the good teacher:

I think there are some teachers in middle schools that do a good job because they're qualified in terms of preparation. They know a lot of history, they know a lot of social studies; there are other teachers who do a good job because they have very good people skills and can work effectively with students. And there are other teachers who do a good job because they are aware of students' learning styles and try to include as many different kinds of experiences for students as they can (Oklahoma, p. 3).

All of the teachers that I interviewed had a tremendous abundance of energy. It was as if one could almost see the wheels turning in their heads as they responded to my questions, and I could see it was difficult for them to sit still. I felt they would have been more comfortable moving around. All of the subjects were very energetic, and this energy radiates in a classroom.

If you don't come in with that zeal into the classroom everyday, or at least most days, then you are not going to be effective (West Virginia, p. 8).

You've got to have a high energy level, if you're standing behind a desk, or you're at a podium, and you're not moving about the classroom, then to me you're stale. You need to be moving in the room and that takes a lot of high degree energy. You need to be constantly moving with the kids and interacting with the kids (18).

Arkansas also sees the effective teacher as one who is not sitting still behind a desk:

I mean, I love to yell and scream with them, and my classroom is never quiet except on test days and that's excitement when the kids are pumped and they're excited enough to want to make each other change their minds. And that's what social studies is all about (p. 8).

Arkansas further adds that the good teacher is exciting, creative, and challenges the students in an effort to bring out the best in his/her students.

[A good social studies teacher is someone] who is exciting, who can quickly get past the stereotypical mumbo-jumbo garbage that social studies teachers are always supposed to teach and or be able to teach it in a creative way. Somebody that challenges kids and makes them think, that brings in the obscure and bizarre, keeps kids on their toes. Somebody who, by listening to them explain their subject matter,

you can tell they truly love what they're doing  
(pp. 3-4).

Intuition is a characteristic most typical of the good teacher. It is the intuitive teacher that picks up on the problems that a student may be having, both personally and academically. It is the intuitive teacher that backs up, shifts gears and goes in another direction when s/he is not reaching the students. It's the ability to use this intuition that makes a teacher a good one:

You have to have a lot of intuition. I can tell, it's not too hard to tell, and if I feel like they're interested in it, I'll keep going with it. If I feel like their interest is, you know, you're thinking, let's get through this, it's boring, then I'll stop and we'll go on to the next section (California, p. 17).

To be intuitive, according to West Virginia, is to walk a tightrope:

I think a good or effective teacher, social studies or otherwise, has to know how to walk the tight-rope. He has to know when to jump down a kid's throat because of the lack of academic effort, he also has to know, or she has to know, when to pat 'em on the back. He has to know how to look at that class and see the look on their faces and see if they are wide awake and interested or if he's totally, or she's totally, gone over their head or the subject matter just isn't there. It's almost... it's a psychological thing to me to see an outstanding teacher. If they have the ability to read, kids, they have the ability to throw up a change ball, like in baseball, to do something different to get the kids to respond differently (pp. 6-7).

Another innate characteristic of effective middle level social studies teachers is that they have fun; they have learned that education and fun are compatible terms:

I had an administrator once tell me that probably the best thing to do in middle school is have a good time, and in two or three years they [middle school students] grow out of it [adolescence]. And what he meant by that was, what we need to do is begin to expand our concept, educating like whole child education I guess you call it, and start looking at ways to maximize the kinds of social interactions the students need in that age range. If teachers are not enjoying themselves, if they're not real comfortable in the class, and teacher comfort, when you find a teacher that is comfortable with themselves and the class that's where you find a good class. I don't think that's necessarily restrictive to middle school either, probably transcends all levels (Oklahoma, pp. 3-4).

Colorado also believes education should be fun:

Another thing too, I don't know whether this is indicative of any good social studies teacher, but if I'm having a good time, they're having a good time. When I'm bored with whatever we're doing, I shake it quickly and get on to something else (p. 5).

[Teaching] is kind of like the entertainment industry; I have a radio we play most of the time, I use a lot of outside influences like that to make it more fun. We play a lot of games. In one of my classes, a lower level class, we played *Risk* for almost two... had a Risk tournament, big Risk tournament. But you know, the kids who

couldn't pronounce continents and countries, can [now], and they loved it (p. 20).

It has often been said that teaching is ten percent imparting knowledge and ninety percent acting. I remember reading of a research project on effective presentation skills. The study was conducted on a college campus. One day the real professor, who was most knowledgeable in his subject matter was to teach the class; the next day an actor was sent in, having no subject matter knowledge and he would teach the class. The students were surveyed and asked who was the better instructor and who they learned from the most. The students overwhelmingly said the actor was the better teacher. Good teachers are frequently good entertainers:

We can sit and shout and scream all we want about, well, these kids aren't learning stuff, and it's probably because they are being nurtured by TV and we have to be better entertainers. Teachers have to be better entertainers. 'Well,' they say, 'I didn't get an education degree to come out here and entertain people.' That's not true, any teacher worth their salt knows they love the ego trip that goes with teaching somebody and saying, 'Damn, I did that, that was great, that kid's learning, he asked a brilliant question today or Johnny for the first time paid attention' (West Virginia, pp. 6-7).

Good middle level social studies teachers are flexible. They are able to adjust their lessons when necessary and are not stuck in a fixed routine. The good teacher does not teach each class the same way. As each child has a unique personality, the same can be said for each different classroom.

I have few discipline problems in my morning class. They are all eager to learn type kids. We do a lot of group work, getting in groups, and discussion and, and I've done a few more projects with them; whereas my afternoon class, I have a lot of boys who are going down the wrong path, don't care, school is not cool to them and they're really hard to motivate. I have some discipline problems in there and I have to really, keep, bear down on them and we have to do things in a little more structured manner. Can't let them off on their own as much as I do my morning class because they won't stick to what they're doing (California, p. 16)

So the good social studies teacher has to be able to adapt to the different types of students that she has, she needs to keep their interests (California, p. 4).

Good teachers are creative. They look for the unusual and are not satisfied with the traditional paradigms of teaching:

You've just got to find something that's going to interest them. There are so many bizarre, weird, humorous, strange things out there that interest kids. You know, to tell a class that Franklin Pierce died of diarrhea, they'll look it up in the book and it'll say dehydration, you say, 'That means diarrhea.' And some student goes, 'How do you die of diarrhea?' And I tell them, 'Hey, he just pooped out!' And everybody understands that basic human function, humor, you know, and everybody gets that. You know to find out that, just the odd things. You know, Ben Franklin wasn't the father of our country, but pretty much could have been the father of France. I mean people don't teach that, but that's what makes it interesting to me. That those people are just like us, and they have problems and they have hang-ups, you know, they die of diarrhea (Arkansas, p. 43).

Good teachers are risk takers. They are never stagnant and they are not content to sit back and let the world go by because they are afraid someone might get upset about what goes on in their class:

To me an effective social studies teacher has to be willing to take a challenge, he has to be willing to take a risk. S/he has to be willing to say, 'I'm going to do this project whether it makes people mad in the community or not, because it needs to be said.' Not that because there's some hidden agenda, but because you dare to be different and if people complain, so be it. You dare to be different because it produces results. And if we want effective change in education, you've got to have teachers who are willing to do different things to make class and to make education interesting (West Virginia, pp. 6-7).

Arkansas agrees that risk taking is critical to good teaching:

Taking a chance, making kids think about things that maybe they've never been allowed to think about before. You know, talking about abortion in class, you get into some pretty heated feelings and you get into some religious things and a lot of teachers just stray away from that. [After a parent conflict] I just wanted to basically fade away for a while. You know, then again, I came back and thought, I'm not doing anybody any favors, you know, or I'm not doing my students any favors, and that's what I value the most, so I better bring some things in to kind of kick start them a little bit. I think that's what risk taking really does; I mean anybody can come in and teach from a book, but to take a chance and bring in, you know, a *Time* magazine to eighth

graders and make them read it and understand it, that's a risk. Some parents won't like that. It's too conservative, or too liberal, or too this or too that, and I think that's where the risk is. It's not with the students, it's with dealing with the parents. Students will try anything once, and that's what I like about them (pp. 25-26).

What's scary to parents, is for their kids to learn new ideas, which makes, either they disagree with the parent or it's something that differs from what their parent taught them and I think that's the kind of chances [risks] we have to take; that's what makes us better people, is to expand our horizons past our little world we live in at home (pp. 26-27).

Motivation is the key to good education. The teacher who can motivate students is the successful teacher. This innate characteristic is one of the most critical aspects of good teaching; the good motivator is the good teacher:

I used to have this one blackboard, just reserved for the quote of the week, and it was fun. Initially it was just done for myself, just to kind of keep myself going through the week. And it got to where students from other people's classrooms would come in on Monday morning to find out what the quote of the week was. And it wasn't just stuff that related directly to social studies, but it was just life in general. I put stuff up there by Malcom X or Bing Crosby, just a tune, you know, song lines or whatever, I mean, I had the janitors coming in, parents would stop by on Monday when they dropped their kids off to find out what it was, and it was kind of bizarre. It just got bigger than it really should have. But it just kept kids going, I mean, it's a motivation, and then at the end of every year, I had them bring in their favorite quote and then they would check back the next

year to see if any of their quotes had been put up from week to week. And the same with posters; again it was accidental, but I'm a big poster person and I would have them do nine weeks' projects and have them do a poster. And they would come back and I would keep, initially it was half, but it started dropping off as the years go by because you find it tougher to replace certain posters, but you know, to have a kid who was an eighth grader last year and see his poster up on the wall his ninth grade year, I mean that was a big thing. And it was never intended to be that, but I mean, there are kids going, 'I'm going to get my poster put up on the wall next year [Mr. Arkansas], my poster will be up!' And you know some did and some didn't, but I mean if that's a tool, if that's a motivation you can use, use what you can. You know to bring in their quotes, because that was part of them that they were giving to me (Arkansas, pp. 41-42).

California also knows the value of motivation:

They're gong to learn on things they're more interested in. And we spend time on things they're not interested in, but you have to. But if they're interested in something, it motivates them more, and it makes them a little more wanting to be there at school and that's important at that age [sixth grade] (p. 18).

### Summary

This section of the presentation of the data revealed the acquired and innate characteristics of the good middle level social studies teacher. Good teachers were constantly going to school to upgrade their education, and most felt this was part of being an effective educator. The good teachers also read a lot and kept up

with the current events. They know the importance of attending workshops, in-service programs and do not mind using their personal time to attend these programs.

The good educator also values his/her profession. These are the people who are concerned about the ramifications of incompetent teachers and how these people hurt the profession. All of the educators interviewed for this project were active in educational organizations.

Most of the subjects had no desire to go into administration; however, several did have administrative certifications. One of the subjects is currently in a semi-administrative position, but would rather be in the classroom. Most felt that if they were going to be effective it would be from the classroom.

All of the teachers interviewed said that the good teacher cares about the students. This seemed to be the most important innate characteristic mentioned. The teachers interviewed were extremely energetic and had a great deal of zeal and enthusiasm for teaching. The high energy levels that these teachers possessed was quite evident in my observations.

Another important innate characteristic was intuition. This was mentioned by several of the subjects and seemed to be one of the most important characteristics for good teaching.

Effective middle level social studies educators are fun people, and they have fun in their classroom. They are entertainers and enjoy it most when they captivate their audience. These teachers are

also very flexible and are able to adjust to whatever is going on in the world so that their students understand history as it is occurring.

The good teacher is a risk taker and a motivator. They are eclectic and eccentric, and often referred to as "different." They use unconventional teaching methods and do not adhere to the traditional paradigms of teaching and are often "at odds" with a traditional administrator. They are creative individuals who are constantly searching for a new methodology that will enhance learning. It is the acquired and innate characteristics that makes the good middle level social studies teachers what they are, EFFECTIVE.

### Methodologies

The good middle level social studies teacher is not content to have the students read the text and answer the questions at the end of the chapter. Nor do they show films four days a week or hand out worksheets by the hundreds. The good middle level social studies teacher are not lazy teachers, and they are in constant pursuit of new and better ways to present their material.

Texas believes that good teaching strategies are:

The majority of the time is going to be student centered, but I'm not an all or none kind of teacher. Some of the literature implies that everything should be student centered and everything should be evaluation and synthesis, all that type of thing. And then there's this back to basic stuff where everything is teacher centered, you just feed them the information and they tell it back to you. I think both extremes are wrong. It has to be a combination; so I think that

you started out teacher centered, you present the information, a certain amount of the information on those first levels of learning, and then the majority of the time you open it up to those higher levels and it's student centered (pp. 17-18).

Texas and Arizona are both strong advocators of Bloom's Taxonomy:

I have a block plan and I use that and I capitalize on current events, but as far as what I... if you're taking one subject, like ancient Roman History and I want to know what part of that I am going to teach today or tomorrow, I kind of divide it up in my mind, and I really do use Bloom's Taxonomy. A lot of people don't like that, but I think it's because they really don't understand it, they don't take the time to deal with it. If you really work with that, you can divide your time up really well. The way I decide depends upon whatever good activities I can develop within Bloom's Taxonomy (Texas, pp. 6-7).

Arizona adds:

They [good teachers] demand higher level thinking skills, they demand high order skills, they go back to Bloom's Taxonomy, they get away from the basic knowledge level and get up into synthesis and evaluation of knowledge and those certain areas. And I know that may not be total, but it is still most popular because it is so simple. There are other taxonomies, the State Department of Education [Oklahoma] came up with a taxonomy that is very complex. I still think it's a good method. Your good teachers are going to be looking at them, trying to get the kids to use a lot of evaluation, use a lot of synthesis. Synthesis is often more important than evaluation because you have to use synthesis to break something down into its smallest components. So I think synthesis

is real important, we don't give enough synthesis (p. 10).

Texas uses synthesis in her method of inquiry:

Inquiry is where we just throw a question out or we throw a subject area out and then we go about to see just what we can find about that. So there really are no boundaries as far as what to learn. At the end of the chapters where you have questions, those definitely have boundaries as to what you're learning. But in, well, like right now we're studying, we were reading a book and we came across Hadrian's Wall and Emperor Hadrian, and [the book] mentioned something about stained glass and I was talking about soldiers moving. So I mean in this story there were several things just mentioned, and if we had just read the story like that we might have just totally passed it by. But I asked the question, 'Hadrian's Wall? Exactly what is Hadrian's Wall? Is it kinda like the Great Wall of China?' And some said, 'No.' And I said, 'And stained glass, is that like the stained glass we have in churches? Wow, that's what it sounds like, and they had stained glass in ancient Roman times? Did they invent it? Where did it come from? How do you make it? What about stained glass?' And that's really just all that I threw out, they've worked for three days. I know more about stained glass than I ever wanted to know. So we just threw out a question and they went out to find as much as they could. They've really come up with some incredible stuff. Really, fun. And when they do that kind of work, I don't have discipline problems. When they're active in that sort of thing, there just aren't discipline problems. But if I told them, I have a project here, I'm going to tell you what I want you to do, go do it and then come back to me, that's when you have discipline problems in groups. But if you open end it, the inquiry, then it cuts out

all of your discipline problems. So just an open ended question. What if, what do you think? And let them go find out what if and what they think. And I learn with them. Can you imagine teaching the same thing every year, over and over, the same questions (pp. 14-15)?

It is in the teacher methodology that creativeness plays an important part. When asked about teaching methods, Oklahoma and West Virginia responded:

[I use] whatever I can think of. Sometimes lecture is appropriate; storytelling, I like to read to students, primary source materials. I like open-ended discussion, cooperative kinds of methods, sometimes mock trials, simulations. I try to be creative and vary the experience of the students (Oklahoma, p. 7).

I'll use, I'll steal, I'll design anything that works. I try to use a lot of group work, a lot of inter-play and when I ask for a kid's opinion, I absolutely mean, 'What is your opinion?' In my classroom I spend a lot of time on what's called a continuum. For example, today, in geography we were talking about population and why population rates are high in third world countries and in first world countries they're low. And so, then I produce a question for the students and ask them to take a position on the floor. If you're in favor of opening all borders to the United States and allow people in, stand to the far right. If you're adamantly opposed, stand to the far left. And then what we have is somewhere in between you can stand yourself, and then I allow the kids to have inter-play, ask questions of one another and then you're allowed to change your mind. So I have that type of continuum that I use in the classroom (West Virginia, p. 11).

Arkansas likes for students to discover and to research:

In a strange way I found that whatever most interests me, most interests my students. But I think the bizarre things, the most fun things about civics, or Oklahoma History or geography, those are the kinds of things that I think are interesting, so they'll think they're interesting. And if I can get them to believe that and get them interested, they'll find out those little things on their own. That's something that I really like to push, and that is students find out things on their own. There's nothing more fun than to see a student come to class and say, '[Mr. Arkansas], look what I found out last night on this thing' (p. 5).

Several of the teachers mentioned the importance of research skills in the social studies classroom.

I think research skills are about the most important. In eighth grade, for example, part of the curriculum for eighth grade language arts and social studies is a term paper. So I teach them traditional term paper writing. But the skills that are used in a term paper can be divided up and you can use those same skills for writing a five paragraph essay (Oklahoma, p. 8).

I'm very heavy on research skills, and that's not just in the library. It's getting, it's where to get information. This is an information age and I think I'd be totally negligent if I had kids sitting around memorizing a bunch of stuff, cause in five years what the memorized probably wouldn't be relevant anyway. But if they know how to go about getting the information, the process is the most important (Texas, p. 8).

California, who teaches both social studies and English, also knows

the value of teaching study skills to her students, so they know where they can find information:

I teach them to use the index a lot so they can find information quickly. I've been working this year on helping them find information in the chapter. So we use, I'm teaching them about the index, the gazetteer, the biographical dictionary, the glossary, we use that a lot, just to help them find information on the chapter. When I got them [her students] in sixth grade, they had no idea what an index was, or how to use it, or how it would help them (California, p. 9).

California is the only teacher interviewed who uses a textbook a good portion of the time; however, she uses the textbook to teach study skills and as a lead into discussion and inquiry. She believes that at the sixth grade level, they need to learn how to use the textbook so that it becomes a tool, rather than something the students hate:

We do book work because I need to prepare them for what's ahead. And they have to do their share of book work, and we do some, but we also go back and we'll find an issue and we'll take it apart and discuss it (p. 4)

One way I try to justify the book work with them is just to tell them that I'm preparing them for what's ahead. I always try to tell them the reason I am having you do this is so you can learn these study skills, so when you have this later on you'll know how to do it. 'It'll be easier for you, and you'll be able to get through,' I always explain that to them so it doesn't seem like I'm just giving them a bunch of boring work to do (p. 9)

When I got them in sixth grade, they had no idea what an index was, or how to use it, or how it would help them. And like I said, I always told them, they're going to have to do book work from now on, lots, especially in high school, if they don't know how to use those study skills, it's going to be twice the work and twice as hard for them. To me, it's an invaluable tool, they've got to know these short cuts and if they know them, they should have learned them earlier, that's a tool that I would just love if they could leave my room knowing how to study and look up things, I think it will help them in college (p. 18).

Arkansas sees book work in a different light:

I'm not a big book person and over, you know my first two years, I, it was, my first year and I had one classroom set so I was forced to stay away from the book a little bit more because I couldn't get any assignments out of it. But I think that was probably the best thing that ever happened to me because I've not found a civics book that I like. I've found civics books that I have to get along with, just because there are some parents out there that demand homework, and I'm not a big believer in that at all times as they would believe in it (p. 7).

West Virginia had some strong words to add about the social studies textbooks:

If I could do something other than teach, it would be to design textbooks to get rid of these banal, boring, nebulous general chunks of lacking information that we call textbooks, that we spend multitudes of dollars on and write a book that is relevant to kids and teachers. I'll give you an

example; my textbook that we use in this classroom, which we rarely use, is for geography. It has a grand total of ten pages dealing with the United States of America. I find that appalling! I find it insulting, and I find that the teachers in this building that are using that book in that capacity are doing an injustice to kids. We ought to know about our own country first and foremost before we jump into other parts of the world (p. 5).

Several of the teachers that were interviewed were somewhat structured when they started the year, but then they were able to move away from this:

I think the bottom line is, you get your structure down and you can do anything with these kids (Colorado, p. 17).

Oklahoma talked about structure in this way:

My problem is, for me, it's important that I be structured and it's less important for me that the students be structured in the classroom. I have to know exactly where everything's going and what the end... what the goals are, what the objectives are, those kinds of things, it's important for me, for my students to understand where they're going with the work they are doing, whatever they're doing, but it's not as important that there is a lot of silence in class. In fact, I kind of prefer the opposite. I like interaction (Oklahoma, p. 5).

Most of the teachers interviewed felt the same as Oklahoma about silence in the classroom. These teachers all seemed to be going in twelve directions at ones, their rooms were noisy and filled with

lots of activity.

Usually I have a lot of trouble with quiet time in the classroom. And so, whenever they're busy working on stuff or something, I'm real uncomfortable with the silence. I feel I should be constantly interacting with them. You know, it's fun, I enjoy my job, I enjoy my kids (Florida, p. 7).

The method mentioned most by the teachers interviewed was cooperative learning. I too use this as a primary teaching tool. Group work, whether cooperative learning or not, is a skill that should be practiced as often as possible, as learning to function in a group is a significant part of life. Most decisions, from those made by churches and schools to the Supreme Court of the United States, are made by groups. It is important that students know how to learn to work with others in a group. While all of the subjects stressed the importance of cooperative learning, Arkansas has spent a great deal of time perfecting his cooperative learning group methodology.

It's that alter-curriculum along with social studies, you learn those social skills and you learn organization and things like that. And the last three years I taught, my principal allowed me to buy tables for my room as opposed to desks, which I hate desks. I like doing posters, I like doing group activities. I like doing hands-on things, so desks were just not conducive to that. So he bought me big, long tables and we put them together and I basically had five groups of six or seven in my classroom and it made it so much more fun for me. It made conducting school so much more fun and exciting for me, and it gives kids responsibility. It instilled

competition, which I liked a lot, among the students. It allowed them to take responsibility for other kids, it allowed them to take care for themselves, you know as far as learning (p. 35).

When my kids come into my classroom, I say sit where you want the first day of school. For about a week or so I let them sit, unless they're discipline problems, where they want, but then after about a week I will assign different people to different tables. And I try to put a balance of every possibility, intelligent, less intelligent, loud mouth, a quiet kid, those kinds of things. I have the rules of cooperative learning that I pass out to them. I have their roles and we discuss what they think their roles should be, before we say you have to do this. I would do weekly competitions where, okay, whoever has the biggest quiz score they would all get a stick of licorice at that table, or they would get a gum pass, they could chew gum. Things like that. Big tests we would get Cokes and Pepsi's. And it's amazing how much motivation a Coke or Pepsi can be. It's just incredible. But you know, it's something different (p. 39).

Florida also does a lot of group work:

We work in groups a lot. My room is structured such that I have full group tables that hold eight kids each, so they do a lot of things together. They learn from each other as well as from me. There's probably more noise in my classroom than in a normal classroom, but it's learning noise. It's not just that the kids are getting out of hand (pp. 7-8).

Arizona, while not teaching at the present time, strongly advocates the use of cooperative learning as one of the most

important teaching tools for the social studies teacher:

You go in and use what I would consider more of the modern teaching techniques, cooperative learning, I believe. You need to be able to have better than pen, pencil and paper activities, you need to have hands-on activities (pp. 2-3).

The good middle level social studies teacher knows that there is a big difference between group work and cooperative learning:

The good teacher of course uses what I consider new progressive teaching methods such as cooperative learning groups, group work, and there is a difference between cooperative learning and group work (Arizona, p. 9).

Texas agrees:

I know of a teacher or two that thinks cooperative learning is everyone pushes their chairs together and they do everything in groups, and I think that's not quite right, something's missing there (pp. 17-18).

I like the groups to work together to teach them to work in groups. I emphasize cooperative learning is not just pushing your chairs together and doing some things together, and there's really a whole lot more to it. So we do a lot of work on how to work in a group, how to work as a team, how does each separate part work together to make a whole? So we do lots of cooperative learning, but that's not just pushing chairs together. From what I've seen in the middle schools, that's what, that's how the teachers are interpreting cooperative learning. Let's all move our chairs together

and do these questions at the end [of the chapter] (p. 7).

Group work is not always fun for all students. Some students do not function well in this setting. Gifted students do not like heterogeneous grouping because they end up doing all the work, especially if the teacher does not have a real grasp of cooperative learning techniques. West Virginia uses the group method, but is aware of the students whose learning styles are not conducive to this method of learning:

We do lots of group work where the kids have to work together in teams and produce information. We may be doing a unit on a state or a region, we may be doing it on human environment interaction; for example, the swamps of Florida or the deserts of Africa, or population for that matter, whatever the case may be. The kids have to work in the teams, they'll use me as a resource as to where they can find information; I simply produce the questions, they produce the answers. And in their answers they have to work together to try to solve and resolve certain things. And then we let these kids teach the other kids using placards, using any information from moguls to a poem with two voices. Sometimes I find I have kids that do not like to work in a group, and when that happens I believe it is up to me to write a contract for that kid and say, 'Look, you still have to know this information, so here's what you're going to be required to do.' So I spend a lot of time, and I'm not crying about the time. Sometimes I have to write a lot of extra lessons for those kids who just do not fit into the group. They're either, either very reticent, or they're very, very... so outgoing or so obnoxious that they just don't fit in, so I... they have to do other work (p. 10).

Other methods used by the good social studies teacher are games, case studies, mock trials, and simulations. These too, for the most part, are done in groups, using team work and developing social skills.

[In] a lot of the activities the groups are competing with each other as far as like in the mock planning commission meeting. For example, each one of them is getting a different industrial, commercial, residential, area and they have to plan a use of the land using those particular purposes, so they're kind of competing against each other. Usually there's a leader, or director, a person who takes notes, a person who delivers the talk to the planning commission, a person who does the visual [preparation]; everyone has an assigned task. At other times, it's just like, if there's co-work activity, written homework activity, things like that, sometimes the kids will divide up the questions and they'll be responsible for it the next day. And there's always one person that will make sure that everyone else in the group did their work (Florida, pp. 8-9).

Both Arkansas and Colorado use games and simulations as methods of study:

I'm a big fan of simulations; I fantasize my support of reality. I think that you get into a lot of theoretical discussion and you know now note taking and things and students can write that down and hear it, but they don't understand it until they apply it. A good round of coup d'état, where you have an overthrow, and assassinations kind of brings government and change to life. You know a foreign policy game where countries

attack each other, where they set up relationships, where they lie on their treaties and things like that. You know there's a slap of reality, as opposed to saying, 'You know, the Start Treaty of seventy whatever failed because nobody trusted each other,' they don't know that, they don't understand it. But, when they can start killing each other or setting up alliances, it's always kind of fun to hear kids thinking. They make these comments during the simulations, but to them its, 'How come she picks all the girls to be in her government?' But the reality of it is, why don't they just.. I mean, it's the same thing as saying, 'Why does he pick all Republicans to be in his government if he's a Republican president?' And once you explain that to them, you see them go, 'Oh,' and the little light bulb comes on and the realities of life have kicked on (Arkansas, p. 6).

Economics is very conducive to games and simulations:

We are in the midst of the [stock market] game, that's what all that junk up there on the wall is. They are the opening and closing stock quotes for the years '91 through '93. The limiting thing about playing the stock market game is, the kids at the middle school, we just don't have the research material to develop real strongly. So I work with what I've got and they have down loaded the computer where I can get daily stock quotes. We buy and sell stocks for ten weeks, and we do it on a national level. We have a transaction sheet that we fill out if they want to buy or sell, we send them to Central State University and there's a stockbroker there that runs it through. Each team gets ten thousand dollars. When I first started playing there were fourteen teams at the middle level, and right now there are fifty-five I think. So the program is really taking off. I found active involvement through the stock market program enhances

economic education so much (Colorado, p. 11).

I did a unit, my economic unit, I did simulations throughout the entire unit. And that was anything that you get as an assignment would turn into money. You get a ledger sheet, you make deposits everyday for your assignments and I had students begging for homework. I told them, 'You guys will beg for homework,' and they're going, 'Yeah, right, [Mr. Arkansas] for sure.' Hey, second or third day, when they started getting a hundred-fifty dollars for a major test or getting twenty-five dollars for a simple worksheet. And then we have auctions on Friday and they can get hats and T-shirts which have been contributed by the community, or Cokes or candy, or they can get a pizza at the end of the nine weeks, whoever has the most money (Arkansas, p. 40).

Florida also uses simulations and case studies and even has his students handle any discipline problems, teaching them responsibility, not only for themselves, but for others.

When I teach the Constitution idea, we go over it, then I address how important that information is as your future, as you face your future. We look at Supreme Court cases, we do a lot of case studies so the kids can understand how people have impacted them (p. 19).

Simulations are super effective with this age of kids and we do a lot, we do mock trials, mock congresses, you know, mock planning commission meetings, just try to bring in a lot of that type activity (p. 7).

We do a lot of things with peers, where a lot of discipline and everything is taken over by the kids, very seldom do I have to step in. The

kids make sure everybody else is behaving, you know, because they do not want to be deprived of privileges or anything else (p. 10).

The methodologies that are used by the good middle level social studies teachers are as varied as their personalities. The primary method used most by the teachers interviewed was cooperative learning. All the subjects felt this was a good way to teach social skills and get the information across to the students. These teachers also used discussion, through the inquiry method and group work, games and simulations as the major teaching tools. None of the teachers interviewed used the lecture method. Some used class discussion, and some talked with their students, but none talked at their students. Several of the teachers interviewed favored inquiry, using Bloom's Taxonomy as a way of questioning their students. Again, none of these students followed the traditional teaching paradigm. California used the text more than the others, but she used it as a tool to teach research and study skills.

### Relationships

This section discusses the relationships that good middle level social studies teachers have with their students, peers, parents, and administrators. Although there were no direct questions in the long interview about relationships, the teachers interviewed talked about the relationships in their answers. Most of the relationships discussed by the subjects were teacher/student relationships.

The good teacher has a deep caring for his/her student. The good teacher is a pedagogue in the truest sense of the word. S/he becomes parent, counselor, psychologist, and friend. These teachers know the importance of being a good role model; they never subscribe to the philosophy, "Do as I say, not as I do." Good teachers set examples. Texas talks about the way some of her students see her as a role model:

It must be getting across, because one day a student came in, this was a couple of years ago, and one student said something that was not very appropriate and another student said, 'You better watch it, you're in Ms. Appropriate's class now.' So they know that I believe in what's appropriate, there's a right time and a right place for everything and they pick up on it. I think that they, and I tell them too, when I start cursing, you can start cursing, and when I start belittling you, you can start belittling people. But use me as your guide, until I do, then don't you (pp. 10-11).

California believes that being a good role model is one of the most important parts of her job:

What I can be is a good role model to them. I can let them know what my values are without coming out and telling them, 'These are my values.' You know, I can't go to them, don't do this, don't do that, don't do this, because they hear that all the time. But at least I can be a good role model to them and in our discussions let them know how I feel without coming right out and saying it. And I just hope, if I could steer one kid in the right direction a year, then I feel like I've been successful.

It makes me happy (p. 13).

In addition to being a good role model, California sees her job as being a part-time counselor, and has to be flexible enough to know when counseling is necessary:

Sometimes we'll be on a chapter and then our discussions will go off on a whole different area and it'll still be about social studies. But I just find that it's really good for them, at that age, to let them talk and let them get a lot off their chests, and let them speak out. Because a lot of times, I have a lot of kids that don't have anybody to talk to, so I guess counseling comes in to it a little bit (p. 5).

Also the good teacher listens to his/her students:

I listen. I mean the kids have a pretty direct influence on at least the units that are taught. I still teach the same material, but if they say this is not the way they think it should be, then I'll find a different way to teach (Florida, p. 20).

The good teacher knows that s/he can learn a lot from his/her students, that education is not a one way street. Ironically, good teachers realize that students are teachers and teachers are learners:

Sometimes I truly think I am the best teacher in my room, but most of the time the kids, I think, are far better teachers than I (West Virginia, p. 20).

In my opinion, the key element to good teaching, no matter what grade level or subject, is respect. Respect has to be earned, by both the student and the teacher. I often hear teachers say, "You

don't have to like me, but you have to respect me." I think that is wrong! I believe students should respect the position that the teacher has, but the teacher has to earn the personal respect.

When I talk to student teachers, and I've had the ability to do this this year more than ever, I was teacher of the year last year, so I got a little bit of free advertising; but I've been able to teach and talk to people [at the near-by university]. I've talked with some of the elementary block students and I love telling them the realities of what school is about. But I tell them all the time, the most important thing you can do is give respect to your students and in return you always get respect from your student, because respect is an important thing you can do. And that makes teaching easier. You can't get respect, you have to earn their respect, but you have to give them respect because they deserve it. They are in a tougher situation than you are no matter what (Arkansas, p. 7).

I also believe that eighth and ninth grade students need to be treated like adults until they show you differently. I think, at least at the eighth and ninth grade level, I think we force them to talk about careers, we force them to talk about later in life, they're making decisions now for later life, but we don't let them make decisions now, little decisions, or we don't let them be heard. I think that if they're old enough to get pregnant and they're old enough to kill someone and they're old enough to do drugs and get drunk and they're old enough to take care of their brothers and sisters around the house, then by gosh they have some of the same responsibilities like adults. You know, but keep in the back of your mind that you are,... there are those that are more mature than others, and which, that's

the way most of us are, I guess (Arkansas, p. 13).

California also talks about respect:

One thing that really helps for me is to really get down and really get to know my kids a lot. We do a lot of discussion that really doesn't have anything to do with social studies sometimes because I feel like if we do that and they know where I'm coming from, and I know where they are coming from, they are more likely to respect what I ask them to do, and their interest picks up a lot more. I know teachers who have gone all year without really knowing their students. You've got to know them inside and out because you have to be so flexible with each one of them. Not all of them can be treated the very exact same way. Although you don't want to play favorites or anything, I'm not saying that, but you've just got to know them, and how they work and how their mind works and how they do things. And you have to get to know them, you have to talk to them on a personal level, I feel. A lot of teachers don't feel that way, but I do because I don't feel like they're going to respect me and want to learn unless they know I'm interested in them and I care about them ( p. 4).

Several of the teachers interviewed talked about their relationships with parents. Parents often hear only one side of a story and are ready to "draw blood" before they hear the teacher's story. This can be frustrating as well as time consuming:

Usually parents [frustrate me]. I've had kids come in and you give them assignments, say, and I was very strict on my assignment policies, if they were not complete, they didn't get credit

for it. And my reasoning was when you go out and do a job, you do a half job and you don't get paid the whole pay. You know, in most cases you're not going to buy a car without the wheels on it. I think people are haphazard about their work and they don't take pride in it. And I think a lot of that comes from the way kids are brought up. I've had meetings with parents who,... I had a nine weeks project due and it was a poster on a famous American, very broad topic. They have to have a certain number of illustrations, they have to have one page of information, but have to have five sources. I always give five sources just because I want the kids to go to someplace other than the encyclopedia. And this student comes back and said that he could only find three sources on his topic. I said, 'You can only find three sources, what was your topic?' And he said, 'Will Rogers.' I said, 'That's crap and you know it,' so I gave him an F and said, 'I'm not going to accept it. I'll give you another couple of days you can find two more sources and show me where you've used that material in your new project and I'll give you credit for it.' Well, he didn't want to do that. So his parents come in and they were just thoroughly upset, they were just furious, because they'd come from a place that didn't have a library, and it wasn't fair that he should have to know how to use the library. This is an eighth grade student, you know, which basically the assignment was given five weeks before it was due, and if he'd had any problem he should have told me or contacted the librarian which was right across the hall from my room (Arkansas, pp. 19-20).

Parents can certainly be annoying, but they can also be very helpful. I have found that parents are easy to get along with, as long as they are informed about what is going on with their child. In my middle school we are required to write a positive note home on one

student at the end of every week. I have had a lot of good feedback because of this small gesture. Parents like to hear the good things that their children are doing in school. It also helps build a good rapport with the students and parents. When a student knows a teacher has written a positive note about them and sent it home, s/he has a tendency to behave little better in that teacher's classroom. Communication with parents is an important part of a good teacher's job.

I also think, and I want to make sure I put this here, that the best teacher inside the classroom also has to be one of the best teachers on a thing called the telephone. If he is not contacting parents, if she is not in constant communication with either a praise or a problem, then to me they are out of the loop. You've got to be calling parents, not to bug 'em, sometimes to praise. I have parents when I call and say, 'Boy, I just want to tell you Candy did a great job today.' There's silence on the other end of the phone for thirty seconds. They can't believe, they've never heard of a teacher, they say, 'My son's been in school now for five years and no one's ever bothered to call me to say something like that.' But communication is vital. I'm on the phone on my planning period from almost the time I get off to the time the bell rings, because I have to stay in contact. I see an effective teacher, I see a teacher that uses the phone. I know that's a simple, simple revelation, but to me it's so very true (West Virginia, pp. 14-15).

Parents have to be in the loop. They have to be in the loop whether they want to be or not. I'm not any better, effective teacher, unless I have effective parents behind me. I believe that with every fiber of my body. I think had I not had teachers calling

my parents saying, 'Your son's this and your son's that,' then I probably would not have gone into education myself (15).

The relationship that the good middle level social studies teacher has with an administrator can sometimes be the determining factor between success and failure for the teacher. Often the administrator is very traditional in his methodology, and since none of the teachers interviewed were traditional, this creates conflict. Florida, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Oklahoma, all had good experiences and relationships with their administrators. West Virginia, seems to be in constant conflict with his administrator. I believe this to be true because West Virginia is so dedicated to teaching that he does not want to be bothered with some of the trivial non-sense that administrators demand. At present, West Virginia is in a building with a very traditional principal, and this is a major cause of frustration for him. However, he knows that to be successful, a teacher must try to get along with the administration:

I also think that an effective teacher has to be able, as much as this is probably my weakest point, you have to be able to get along with the administration. And if I had a weak point that would, I mean, I'm sure I have many other weak points, but my major weak point would be administrative wise because I disagree with so many of their, of so many policies that are, that are detrimental. [At this time the intercom interrupts our conversation for the fourth time]. That [pointing to the intercom speaker] would be the next thing I would change. I think effective principals in effective schools get rid of inter-

coms. It teaches kids to be rude, it teaches them that they can interrupt without saying, 'I'm sorry,' it says, 'We supersede anything your teacher or anything you're doing at the moment.' It is one of the worst things that can ever happen (p. 15).

The last group of relationships that the teachers interviewed spoke of, was the relationship they had with their peers. Most good teachers strive to have good relationships; however, this is not always possible, as the good teacher is often the one who is the most popular teacher with the students. As a result, the good teacher is the one who everyone wants to be in his/her room, and it's the good teacher that throws conventional methods out the door; often this meets the disapproval of other teachers. A number of the teachers I visited with said they gave their students rewards. Arkansas tells about meeting a teacher in the lounge as he was getting pop as a reward for some of his students:

I'd catch crap from people, you know, I'd come to the lounge getting cokes out of the refrigerator. 'Oh, you giving your kids coke and stuff?' My response is basically, 'Shut the hell up and leave me alone. It's my classroom and I'll do what I want.' And my principal is very supportive. It's my money, you know, I got donations, I went out and dug them up and stuff, so. And it's not say, you know for the kids to say, 'Gosh, [Mr. Arkansas] is the best teacher because he gives us cokes, but the grade improvement was incredible when they started getting down into cooperative learning stuff. And the kids enjoyed it more (p. 39).

Most of the good teachers seemed to have a good relationship

with their peers, and many are willing to share ideas. The good teacher sees their peers as colleagues, not competitors and knows that when they share ideas, the students are the ones who benefit. The good middle level social studies teacher puts the students first, all students, not just the ones in his/her class. When the students are put first, the good teacher will share his/her ideas and ask peers to share their ideas:

I'm not in the competition business with my colleagues and I don't ever want to be in that position, and I don't ever want to sound, and hopefully they will kick me out of this profession when that happens, I don't want to ever sound like I think I am a better teacher than anybody (West Virginia, p. 20).

West Virginia and Arkansas believe in sharing with their peers:

I think the other thing that I see about effective teachers is they are willing to share with other teachers. They're willing to go in and suggest team teaching a unit. If I see the science teacher over here doing something and I go, wow, that's pretty neat, then I'll be the first on her door step to say, 'Look, I've got a great idea, you and I, with your great knowledge of math and science, we ought to team teach this, this cool thing you're doing.' And so if I can get her fired up, then we can team teach and that's what we're all after anyway is to get the kids to have a recognition that this is not only important in math and science, it's also important in geography, and music and art (West Virginia, p. 13)

As I get better at it [sharing with peers], I find it more important. Because I realized there is not way I can think of everything by myself.

Although, I mean, I tried hard those first couple of years, because there were people in my department who I want to be better than. I mean, I wanted kids to say, '[Mr. Arkansas] is the best civics teacher, and that's still important to me because being the best now, I find myself being better than myself. I want to be better than I've been before, and I don't kind of let it out on those other people in my department. But I realize that they have things that they do well also. Even the worst person in my department does some things well, and I've stolen ideas from them and I know people have stolen ideas from me. That makes me feel good you know, it makes me more willing to share (Arkansas, p. 27).

I think Arizona best sums up the relationship that is needed to be an effective middle school teacher:

I don't think you can be an effective middle school teacher if you're an island out there among the so called quote, 'junior high' teachers that just want to teach their own subjects and be in their own classroom (p. 3).

The good teacher has strong relationships with all who are involved with the middle school whenever possible. They follow the 'no man is an island' philosophy. The teachers interviewed were more interested in the relationships they had with their students. It was very important to all the interviewees that they set good examples and be good role models. It is the relationships that the pedagogue has with those around him/her that adds to their classroom effectiveness.

Middle School/Junior High Characteristics, Philosophy, and Psychology

One of the difficulties I faced when doing the research for this project was that some of the good teachers taught at junior high schools, while others taught at middle schools. It would have been easier if there was some consistency, but in Oklahoma, the middle level students are in different middle level organizational structures. The grade levels are inconsistent also. In some schools, eighth grade is middle school, in some it is in junior high. There are some schools where the sixth grade is still in an elementary setting, and the middle school is comprised of seventh, eighth, and ninth grade. Some middle level schools have only two grades, some only one, such as a seventh grade center, or a sixth grade center.

I felt it was necessary to look at the middle level organization because that is critical to the way the good middle level social studies teacher teaches. The middle school philosophy follows the idea that a teacher is a middle school teacher first, then subject oriented second. The junior high is just the opposite. Many of the schools are labeled middle schools, but in reality they are functioning as junior high schools.

I think to be a good middle school teacher, here's what, if you can be a good middle school teacher, you can be a good teacher anywhere. Because I think middle schools have to take on so much more, the pressure at the middle school level, to be an effective middle school teacher, not to be just an average middle school teacher, but to be an

effective middle school teacher is going to be much, much higher. I think it's critical for the whole school to be supportive of each other at the middle school level (Arizona, p. 3).

The teachers interviewed felt that teaming and interdisciplinary planning and teaching are two of the basic elements needed in middle level education:

I think teaming is critical, understanding the concepts of teams. To be a good middle school teacher you need to dissolve some of those arbitrary time periods often combining other time periods with other teacher to team teach. Team teaching is not just where one teacher teaches and the other one goes to the lounge. Team teaching is where both teachers take their expertise and combine those so that each uses their areas where their expertise is the highest in order to convey information to the kids (Arizona, pp. 3-4).

Arizona goes on to say,

I think there needs to be an interdisciplinary approach at the middle school level. I've done some workshops with interdisciplinary units, given a lot of workshops on how to put interdisciplinary units together. I believe at the middle school level it is critical to utilize a lot of interdisciplinary units. All the different areas need to be brought in an interdisciplinary unit. That takes teaming, that takes teachers sitting down and saying, 'I'm going to be doing this and this and this;' often times meeting together as groups. So I think that type of teaming is critical, takes time and an ability to work with each other. Middle school teachers cannot be

an island unto themselves, they have to be able to work with each other (Arizona, pp. 3, 5).

Evolving from the individual teacher, such as the one at a junior high, to a team teacher involves a process. Arizona discusses this process:

Stage one, they [teachers on the team] really don't even know each other, the teachers don't know each other on this team, they don't meet together, they don't really see many advantages of teaming and that's stage one. Stage two they start meeting occasionally, they meet together mainly for parent conferences, but they don't even prepare for those conferences as a team. When they do meet their sessions are not that productive, they often turn into a medley of topic sections, which happens in the lounge. And stage three is where the team is starting to get along well together, they are pretty active, although it's still not regular, they've agreed finally on a uniform set of team rules that the whole team, all the kids are to follow. They try to coordinate their test dates, they try to coordinate homework assignments, major projects, they usually meet together before they have a parent conference so they can plan for the conference, so they can go in there as a group and really determine what they think is best for the kid [Four] is the support stage. They are really starting to get long well. They start to respect each other, they like each other a lot, they meet very regularly, they are structured, they're purposeful, they're productive, and they have agreed totally on a common set of rules for the team. They probably, at this point, have a team calendar so they can coordinate all the different tests. It's not they're agreeing to have tests at

a certain time, they're calendaring that and probably at this point have it posted in the classroom so the kids can see it. They get together, they do things, they correlate their instruction, they even eat lunch together, you know, things like that. The last stage, stage five, they are truly a team. They're totally cooperative, they support each other. The team identity is totally established. The students are brought together quite often to do things together at this point. Team meetings are scheduled regularly; they follow an agenda; they follow team decisions. The work is divided up between the different teachers, so that no teacher is overburdened. At this point they are really sharing student information; they're sharing concerns for particular kids; they isolate those kids that might fall through the cracks, ones that often fall through the cracks at the middle school level, often those kids are lost for the rest of their educational life (p. 6-7).

Oklahoma adds:

Middle school is such an interesting age for children, not to mention for the teachers who teach middle school. A good teacher in middle school probably has, it's kind of a baseline, a good rapport with kids, and is accepting of middle school kids and has an appreciation for what they are suppose to be like and what their potentials are (p. 10).

The middle level schools must address the psychological development of the students. These students do not know what they want from one minute to the next. They are happy one second, only to be in the depths of dispair five minutes later. It's an interesting

age, and one must really enjoy this age level if they are going to be effective at this level:

I think I enjoy it because eighth and ninth grade thirteen, fourteen, fifteen year olds, the chromosomes, the hormones, the lapse of brain, just the excitement about life. They still think they can change things and yet they haven't been bludgeoned to death like seniors in high school. They're not dedicated toward graduation, getting to college, getting a job, that's too far away for them. So they're excited about this broad spectrum of social studies, when you have a kid cry in class about her feelings about abortion or anti-abortion, or about gun control, or gangs; things like that, and they really take it to heart. I mean, they're emotional about it. That's excitement and that's where they are learning because that sticks with them (Arkansas, p. 8).

Oklahoma and Arizona both discussed the psychological stages of the middle level student.

There are so many things they are going through. Physical, emotional, psychological and social changes and that's what we should be working on. That's what we should focus on as opposed to trying to get kids to make sense of any type of achievement. There are all kinds of studies that indicate that we can't totally focus on academics, we know enough about Piaget to suggest that almost all of these students, except a very small percentage, are very concrete operational, and yet we try to teach them abstract things (Oklahoma, p. 4).

First you have to look at where these kids are coming from. I'm a big Erikson fan and Erikson's stage that middle school kids are in is called identity vs.

identity diffusion. And these kids are trying to determine what their identity is. Trying out different roles, their social part of their life is critical at this point. They really are developing who they are going to be, they're breaking away from their parents at this point. Many of them are moving into Piaget's formal operational stage from the concrete operational stage and this will take a few more years for them to do that. This is a real critical period in the time of any young person (Arizona, p. 1).

The middle school teacher has to realize that this is a different animal they are dealing with. They are going to have to deal with all the social aspects, they are going to have to deal with the highs and lows that these kids are going through, they have to deal with the peer pressures that other kids are putting on them. They have to deal with the roles that they play, the wild roles and the tame roles and the emotional roles and the distant roles. And first to be a good middle school social studies teacher you have to have a good grounding in what kids are going through at this age. You have to have a high level, and I think probably the highest level of any grade of teaching, or grades of teaching, you have to have the highest level of empathy. You have to be able to feel often times what these kids are going through. I think it's pretty obvious you can turn off a kid at the middle school and you can never turn him back on just based on your relationship with them (Arizona, pp. 2-3).

There is some controversy over what grades should be at the middle level; perhaps this is why Oklahoma has not tried to establish a consistency of middle grades throughout the state. Some believe it should include grades six and seven, others see it as six, seven, and eight, and some think it would be best if it were fifth, sixth and seventh. California, who has elementary credentials (even though

she now teaches in a middle school), does not like the idea of having sixth grade at the middle school level:

I don't agree with putting sixth grade in middle school. I kind of like the way [school district name] does it; maybe with having a sixth grade center and a seventh grade center, that idea appeals to me. That way they feel like they're separate from the elementary. The problem is, when you get these sixth graders in with these seventh and eighth graders, there is such a difference between sixth and seventh and eighth. This is such a pivotal year for these kids, but when they look at these seventh and eighth graders and see how they are, it turns them around and they start acting the same way. I taught sixth grade with the elementary and they were a little bit, oh, uppity, because they were top dogs you know in elementary, but they were still elementary. They were still impressionable, you could still work with them, and they wouldn't have this negativity to them. When they're with the middle school they look at the seventh and eighth graders and I see so much more negative attitudes from them. It's a very impressionable age, sixth grade (p. 15).

I can see a lot of difference in the sixth graders that I teach. They really are still at the concrete operational age for the most part and they have trouble with ideas and concepts. I often feel like I just have to baby-sit my sixth graders because there is such a difference in their maturity level.

The question of what grades should be included in middle school will probably never be resolved, as there are too many variables to consider, and every educator at the middle level

probably has some notion of what grades s/he thinks should be included in a middle school. The one thing I think that the teachers interviewed do agree on is that this is a very vulnerable age and that the middle level is where teachers must be aware of many of the emotional, physical, psychological, and social development of the students they teach.

### Values

One of the questions the teachers interviewed were asked was, what do you value as a teacher? Each valued something different, but most of the teachers interviewed said they valued their students or their relationship they had with their students:

I value my students. That's what makes teaching more fun than anything. The kids and their different personalities and bizarre attitudes and the things that they think are interesting. Keeps me on my toes, and that makes life more interesting (Arkansas, p. 10).

[I value] kids. I look at everything I do as an opportunity. I learn, I think sometimes, more from them than I actually teach them. Which is sad, but I do (Colorado, p. 12).

I value the relationship I have with every kid in my room (Florida, p. 11).

Others value the effect they have on the students and the interaction and relationship they can have with their students:

I value the effect that I have on kids. There are so many kids with such, [sic] who don't have

any support at home, none. And when they can come up to me and tell me a personal problem and I can help them with it, that's what I value the most (Colorado, p. 12).

I value the success of my students. You see, middle school teachers, in my opinion have more impact on kids than any other teachers. They have more impact than elementary teachers; they have more impact than secondary teachers. They are teaching kids at a critical time. That's the most important thing, the impact you have on a kids life (Arizona, 11).

[I value] the opportunity to interact with young people and concentrate in that interaction on some kind of, something that is meaningful to me. I tell my students at the beginning of the year that the best thing about teaching is that I like young people and I like history, and it's an opportunity that I have that will provide both of these. There's no other job for me (Oklahoma, p. 9).

Texas values a future, and her part in making the world a better place:

I value a future, and I don't mean to sound silly. I value a future and I value education in an individual. And I don't think there's any future if we don't have quality education. At one time when I was very young I thought, 'I'm going to change the world.' But now that I'm older I realize I cannot change the world, but I can change my part in it, and then I'll put my part that I change with the part that you change and maybe in that way we can make a difference. 'Cause I really believe in the future,

I value that and I really value human beings, and you put that together and it spells EDUCATION (pp. 9-10).

West Virginia values the effect he has on his students:

We don't know how to say thank you enough to our friends, our parents; but at the end of the year when those kids write in my yearbook, I tell them I want them to put their honest gut feeling. And when kids write in that yearbook at the end of the year, '[Mr. West Virginia], 'you are the greatest, inspirational teacher I've ever had,' that's all I need. And you know, I get those occasionally. And I don't think, maybe I'd take a million dollars, but when you hear that, or you read that, or some kid comes up and gives you a hug and says, 'Mr. West Virginia, you know I really got that, that was really neat, that was really neat.' Some kid that as for the whole year couldn't have cared less comes up and gives you a hug, pats you on the back, or you know, middle schoolers are really funny about how they show affection anyway; but you know when they approach you that they're trying to hand you a compliment even when they make it a sarcastic remark, you know they're handing you a compliment. And I guess that's what I'm after. For them to give me a hug, for them to say, '[Mr. West Virginia], this is a great class, I've learned more in this class than I ever learned any other time;' I have to believe in my heart that they mean it. So I think that's why I'm here, I think that's why I stay with it (pp. 20-21).

Social studies is a subject that lends itself to the teaching of moral and social issues, and the middle school level is the time when

many of the moral and social issues of the student are being formed. It is part of the identity that these students are wrestling with. The good social studies teacher can instill good moral and social values through his/her teaching and through the example s/he set. Arizona really believes in teaching these concepts to students:

You certainly should deal with moral and social issues. That's high on the kids minds. I mean, they have an exaggerated sense of right and wrong, everything is often black and white to them, they often times don't see any gray, they need to be taught that there are grays out there; the same time, they have to be taught rights and wrongs, and we need to be working on these. There is less respect today for authority figures, the law, there's more crimes being committed by the young people and I have to ask, 'Why are they making the wrong decisions?' I believe it is because they are asking the wrong questions. They usually ask, number one, 'Will I get into trouble?' Secondly, 'What's in it for me?' Third, 'How can I get away with it?' If you ask young persons why they follow rules, most will say because they know they will get into trouble if they don't. Now that may be a reason to follow a rule or a law, but it is the worst reason to do so. If students follow rules only to keep from getting in trouble, then what reasons do they have to follow rules if they will not get into trouble? The answer is simple, none. Young people today easily can convince themselves that they will not get into trouble and when they do, that they will probably ignore the rule. Students need to be taught that 'not getting into trouble' is the poorest reason there is for obeying rules or laws. When kids ask, about anything, rules, laws, homework, whatever, 'What's in it for me?' they only see themselves. A lot of kids today live in the ME generation. Everything is based around ME... and

how will something help ME. Thomas Jefferson believed that democracy would fail in these United States if we lost our "Civic Virtue," the concept that we should all be making sacrifices for ourselves for the good of the whole, for the whole country. The third wrong question, 'Can I get away with it?' A good example of that is when parents give their child or children the right to stay out past the appropriate time. But they will also confess that they stay out five or ten minutes later sometimes. Now when questioned about this, they will say, 'Because I know I can get away with it.' Now this is an inappropriate answer to that question. The correct question that our young people should be asking is, 'What is the right thing to do?' and I emphasize right. If we can just teach students to ask the right questions, we will get the right answers. I believe this is an important part of civic education, is teaching kids to ask the right questions so they can evaluate every situation in the proper perspective. They must be taught that the wrong questions always lead to the wrong answers. I believe middle school teachers should teach students to ask, 'What is the right thing to do?' To me, those are the most important moral and social issues we can teach in our middle schools today, and certainly social studies class at this level is an excellent place to begin teaching these values (pp. 12-13).

Florida believes that morals should be taught by example, more so than "preaching:"

I tell kids from the beginning, I guess I'm not a real big person on moral teachings I guess, as for the way that Rush Limbaugh or others would probably identify them. I tell the kids that I will never lie to them. There may be times that I opt not to answer their questions, but I won't ever lie. No kid has ever heard me lie to them because

I won't do it. And I think that that's the biggest moral thing you can teach, that honesty is always most important (Florida, p. 16).

Colorado also places a great deal of emphasis on honesty:

I really develop my teaching skills, I think, on honesty and integrity. The best example I think that I can give, a lot of teachers complain and moan about they [students] don't come in with their pencils. And I even attended Dr. [Harry] Wong's institute twice and he says, 'GIVE THEM A PENCIL, THEY NEVER COME WITH A PENCIL!' And he's never figured out a way to get them to get a pencil. Well, that isn't all of the, and that's not most of the time, and I've had teachers do shoes and money to get their pencils back. Not me, I'm not going to fool with that. There's more important things in the classroom than pencils. I ask them only to return a pencil. I get them all back. Their word is good enough and that is what I try to push, honesty and integrity. And when I do that the whole world opens up... it's trust. I guess if you want to call that moral, that's the big thing (pp. 12-13).

Human dignity is another social issue that is taught:

The kids know they are not allowed to talk negative about another person; they know they're not allowed to use any type of racial language in my classroom and they will tell you, they'll go, 'You can't say that in front of [Mr. Florida] because that bothers him.' And they've learned that even though it might be something that's accepted in their homes, in their lives, it's not accepted in my room. And they don't bring it in there (Florida, p 17).

I think most teachers really desire to someday

reproduce themselves. I would like for my students to be thoughtful, and aware of the world around them, to minimize the effects of prejudices, and to offer them a view that there is more in the society that we live in than just the sub-culture that they come from, where ever that is (Oklahoma, p. 9).

West Virginia thinks that he has an obligation to teach hope:

So many teachers in social studies and the sciences make it sound like the world is in doom and despair, but we can teach kids that there are a log of bad things out there, and a lot, a lot of terrible, terrible situations, but we can also teach them that there are some good things; that man can solve problems and that's why they're getting an education, to help solve the problems or else they shouldn't be here either (p. 22).

Texas wants her students to value people and themselves:

I want them to feel the value of other people and I want them to feel the value themselves. Since that's what I value so highly, people ( p. 10).

Arkansas also believes in the value of others:

They [students] have a responsibility to other people, not just to themselves. They have a responsibility to make their ideas heard because that educates us all. Whether we agree or disagree makes no difference; it's just they need to be heard and make themselves heard, they need to make sure other people are educated to their values. And then you have an intelligent view and research those views and stay informed. I'm constantly asking them what they think. And again, at this age, that's what makes that exciting

because so few people have really and truly asked them, 'What do you think about this?' But their parents tell them what they should think about it. [In] middle school there's not a whole lot of discussion because I think people believe that they're not intelligent enough to have, to form opinions, which I think they are. But this is the place where they ask them. And they just, they just want to be heard so badly, and I think high school kids are like that too, they just want to be heard (pp. 10-11).

After I interviewed the subjects, I went back and listened to the tapes. As I reflected on the teachers that I interviewed, I realized that these people were all truly excellent examples of good middle level social studies pedagogues. None of the teachers were just giving lip service to what they thought I wanted to hear. Their voices and body language reflected that they valued the social and moral issues that they wanted to teach their students, either through example, or class work.

#### Social Studies Curriculum/Evaluation

This section investigates how the good middle level social studies teacher values the social studies curriculum. It also looks at how the teachers decide what to teach within their areas of social studies.

I asked the subjects to pretend that the school board was going to remove social studies from the curriculum and what would they say to the school board to get them to change their mind. Their responses gave me an idea of how they valued their subject.

Their responses were as varied as much as their individual personalities and teaching methodologies:

So I would say to the administrators, of course it would be administrators, who else would think of doing something so dumb? I would say simply that to get rid of social studies and all that is encompassed in that is to set up our future into a very precarious position, and that would be extremely irresponsible as educators. They've done almost the same thing with homemaking, at the very time when the world is falling apart as far as family life, they get rid of home and family life. That's very irresponsible (Texas, pp. 12-13).

I have the greatest respect for people who teach math and English, because to me those are the two dumbest subjects in the world. I would shoot myself if I had to teach those, because there's no, there's no spice of life. I mean, math is the same this year as it was last year, it's not going to change. English is the same way, a comma goes in the same place this year as next year. But next year there's not going to be a revolution in the Soviet Union, if there is going to be, one has to know why that happened. Somebody has to know and be able to teach why we have the situation in Somalia, and Africa, and South America. It gets back to the computer age and the information highway, you can talk to somebody, but you've got to know who you're talking to, or at least have some idea. You know where they're located, or what their backgrounds are. We are not the same, thank God, and that's what makes life so interesting. And that's why social studies should be taught (Arkansas, p. 12).

Social studies to me, I mean I know math and reading and language are very important, but social studies to me is, these kids understanding where they came from and how they got to where they are. I can't imagine having school without having social studies of any kind, especially history. Because, like I said, they learn where they come from, they learn their roots; we didn't get where we are by just, I mean a lot of them, they think they just wake up and live and they don't ever know about all the people that have suffered so they could be where they are today. I just don't see how they could go through life without knowing that, that's basic to me. [Without social studies].. They [students] are going to grow up with all the wrong kind of values if they don't know about all the people who have fought for us and suffered for us to get us the way we are. If they don't know how we got here, they're just going to think that they exist, and I don't know, I just think it's important that they know that people have done things so they can be where they are today and how they are today. Their freedoms, I like for the kids to know, always to know, how it could have been, one little wrong move and we would not be here the way we are today, we would not have the freedoms we have. I just think that's so important for them, I just don't see how they can go through life not knowing that (California, p. 14).

[To remove social studies from the curriculum] would be like cutting the heart out of education. I just don't think you can cut the heart out of a school system like that. 'Cause that's the basis of our life style in this country, civics,

economics, social studies, and without some form of appreciation for the past, you can't develop into the future (Colorado, pp. 13-14).

I certainly agree with Jefferson, that if we are going to maintain a democracy in this country, we have to educate our young people in the ways of citizenship. Social studies is the basis for life; it's teaching people how to get along in society. We must teach the decision making skills that I mentioned earlier, and that is critical at the middle school level. I firmly believe if we lose that in middle school, it's lost forever. You many never see the results, because often what a kid learns in middle school social studies is not even internalized until later in life (Arizona, p. 13).

Social studies has almost become a junk yard. The word social means, it sounds like we all get together and we just sit and talk about problems. In reality, social studies is a highly complex and compound subject matter. They are taking social studies out in many schools in New York, many schools in California. They've just simply run out of funds to have the class, so they've mixed it, they just have a multicultural program, just a menagerie of junk (West Virginia, pp. 27-28).

The end product of education without social studies would be horrific. That there would be no appreciation for the past and present, there would be no appreciation of regional and international differences, and there would be no appreciation of possibilities for the future (Oklahoma, p. 9).

They [school board] know how much I value my curriculum. I think the important thing

to point out, not just how much I value my curriculum, but how important it is and the things that they [students] are learning. But just to be real honest with you, there are areas of social studies that I would not object to having removed from the curriculum (Florida, p. 18).

As I listened to the responses that the teachers interviewed gave, it became apparent to me that many school districts are doing a great injustice by letting unqualified coaches and teachers who have no respect or love of the subject teach our children social studies. The main problem, as I see it, is that students may learn geography, history, civics and economics, but if the so called, "social studies" teacher does not have the value of the subject, then s/he does a great wrong to the students.

The subjects were asked how they decide what to teach. Most of the teachers interviewed follow their district's curriculum guide so some degree. Some of the districts are very specific in what material they want presented, others just toss out a subject and say, "Teach it."

When I first arrived here they handed me a textbook and said, 'We want you to teach western civilization. We want you to teach western hemisphere.' And I just shook my head, 'What part of western hemisphere? What part of history do you want me to teach? How far back do you want me to go?' And they didn't even have a clue (West Virginia, p. 23).

Many of the districts provide curriculum guidelines for the teachers:

I have a guideline of what I'm supposed to teach in sixth grade social studies and I go by that guideline. There are some, I go off sometimes on different areas. Like I'll spend more time on one area than another if I find the students are interested in something (California, p. 7).

I go to the curriculum guide they have established for this area and I make sure that that is all covered, and then anything that's current, that comes out, I try to; and current, I mean current by the *Wall Street Journal*, *Tulsa World*, for this area, and I try to pull in anything I can from that (Colorado, p. 7).

What I teach in [school district name] is pretty well established according to the curriculum. What to emphasize is another thing. And quite frankly, I try to pick out things that have a certain amount of interest for students and that relate to as much as possible, to contemporary issues (Oklahoma, p. 6).

Our curriculum is so full. I was the one that really pushed to get U.S. geography added to our curriculum in the eighth grade because I felt like the kids were being turned loose and they were not very literate in U.S. Geography. We have a World Geography class, but it's a one semester class, and there's not enough time in the day or in one semester to teach World Geography, plus U.S. Geography. So we've added to our curriculum. Well, it meant that I've really had to condense a lot of my other curriculum this year. Our curriculum is pretty full. It's a tough decision [what to teach] because to do this we've had to give up things like, it's real difficult to get much foreign policy and

things like that. I'm hoping through their American History courses in high school that they will develop and understanding of foreign policy (Florida, p. 9).

### Evaluation

The final section is evaluation. This will be divided into three areas: student evaluation, teacher evaluation, and standardized testing.

I once heard from a professor that the evaluation process is one of the most important aspects of a teacher's job. The grade we give can have all sorts of repercussions, and it is important to put a great deal of thought into the evaluation process.

The subjects were more traditional in their types of evaluation than they were in their teaching. Most used testing as the major form of evaluation, but some were using the portfolio system and other more creative methods:

I use pencil and paper tests, obviously, but also essay writing, portfolio kinds of information is also helpful, where students develop different kinds of output I guess is a good word. Pictures, poems, any kinds of things like that I can use to relate to the social studies curriculum, to the kids. A portfolio would just be a collection of things that students put together over a period of time and it could include all kinds of different things from comprehension questions and answers to short essays, pictures, to other kids of graphic representations. [Things in the portfolio] can be assigned, it can be things that students provide for extra credit, it could be things that students just bring in on their own. I do keep

files on all students (Oklahoma, p. 6).

West Virginia, on the other hand, is not in favor of this system:

They haven't sold me yet on the portfolio system. I don't think it works for this grade level, at least I haven't seen it work (p. 25).

Some of the other teachers use testing and homework and put a lot of emphasis on projects:

If kids come into my class and they take a test and they do poorly, I allow them to re-take the test at eighty percent value. We do have lots of quizzes because I want to see that they are on top of the issue and we have lots of maps, lots of graphs, lots of homework. And I'm still from the old school, ninety, eighty, seventy, sixty percentile. I believe it's good for the kids. It's the only way I know how to measure. If I try to come in here and measure kids because I think they know something, I think I would be naive. So I still use the same old test method, although I interlace tests and homework with things called projects. My kids do an inordinate number of projects, and I find most of the kids find them palatable. It's things that they enjoy doing lots of research, lots of writing, finding lots of information about peoples and countries and conditions. So between quizzes, maps, and homework, graphs, charts, the test itself, and major projects, that's how I determine the evaluation of students. It's probably not very good, but it's the only way I know how to do it (West Virginia, p. 25-26).

California also does tests, but since she is an English teacher also, she uses a lot of essay type questions moving her sixth grade students onto higher levels of thinking.

We take tests, you know, they need to, we take a test over each chapter, they've got to know how to take tests. And I evaluate, on my test, though I always give a written essay question, and I think that's really important too, because a lot of the essay question is not really a factual thing. I give them a, 'How do you feel about this thing?' I think that's really important. I can tell by them answering that question how much they have understood the chapter. And so I evaluate on the essay question quite a bit. Sometimes they have assignments they need to do and I evaluate those and I can tell they've really tried hard on something or whether they've just whipped through it real quick and given it to me (California, pp. 8-9).

Colorado uses testing, but has a different approach:

I use testing, but I do it differently. I look at those tests as a tool, and everything we do I try to take a grade, a percentage grade on it and I know that's kind of... but that's the established, traditional way, and that's what a parent wants to see and so that's what I do. But I use that as a tool, I really do. I will even go so far as to give them the test to review (Colorado, pp. 7-8).

Two of the teachers interviewed mentioned standardized testing, but

neither spoke favorably of this type test:

We can give them the standardized testing; this is the biggest waste of the taxpayers money. There is absolutely no correlation between state test results and success in life. If we say [that] a good middle school social studies teacher [will have] high test scores, then we are way off base. That's not to say they won't have those test scores, but the good teacher will address the needs of the students in her class, in her community, and will teach to that, she will never teach to any standardized test which many administrators are proposing that they do, and of course, that's not just social studies either. And tests should never be used to evaluate how good a teacher is doing in the classroom. Those tests are just something for the newspapers to use to run a story and point to this school and say that it's good and this one is bad, which creates other problems because it says to the students attending the "lower" school, 'Hey, you're not as good as the kids going to the other schools in town.' It's wrong! Teachers whose main goals are to teach what's on a standardized test are mediocre teachers at best, at least in my opinion. Because what's covered on that test created in Iowa or Stanford or wherever, may not be what is valuable for a kid in Oklahoma. And that's what it's all about, that's what's number one, what's in a kid's life (Arizona, p. 14).

Oklahoma adds by saying,

There tends to be a greater focus on achievement test scores, there's a greater emphasis being somewhere on the achievement continuum, somewhere else, somewhere higher perhaps. I think achievement tests are important, I do think they indicate a lot of what goes on in schools, but I think as soon as they become an end all, and be all, that a lot

of what goes on in schools, a lot of other kinds of processes are put aside (p. 11).

West Virginia spoke, not fondly, of outcomes based education:

We are trying, or in the throws, of this ubiquitous term, OBE. I'm having great problems with OBE, I'm not certain anybody's described OBE to me, I'm not certain anyone ever described totally and completely, concretely, what the term objectives means to me. I mean, I think I know, but I'm not real sure. So when we have administrators who say, 'We want you to take on OBE and we want you to re-test, re-enforce the test, we want you to re-enforce the learning, re-enforce the lesson,' I look at them, incredulously, and say, 'How would you like for me to do that? We don't have a separate room, we don't have a separate teacher, but yet you want me to teach, evaluate these kids on a different level,' which basically OBE means. But I'm trying. I'm not trying to be negative, I'm trying. So basically what I do is if I have kids who are leveled, or we don't really have leveling, but if we have kids who are identified as special learners, I put them aside. I give them different leveled materials, I give them different tests, some kids who have really great problems writing, I'll allow other students to write for them, although I have a great problem with that (West Virginia, p 25).

Only one of the teachers mentioned having the students evaluate him:

I give a test at the end of the year, which isn't graded, but I use it to evaluate me on how well I've taught. It's a hundred question test over the curriculum for the whole year, and I go back and evaluate that (Florida, p. 10).

This section has dealt with the curriculum and evaluation of the good middle level social studies teacher. While most of the teachers use creative methods of teaching, most did not use such creativeness in their evaluations of their students.

Looking back on the questionnaire, I wish I had asked each educator their opinion of standardized testing and outcomes based education. Both of these topics were brought up by a couple of the teachers interviewed, without any initial probing. It would be interesting to see what the other subjects felt about these two areas.

Most of the teachers interviewed followed some sort of curriculum guide that was provided by the district in which they taught. While they followed the curriculum guide, they certainly did not restrict their teachings solely to those guides, but most did make sure they covered the appropriate subject matter.

#### SUMMARY

This chapter revealed the thoughts and ideas of the good middle school social studies teacher. The presentation of the data was divided into three major categories of teachers: incompetent, average and good. The good teacher data was then broken down into the following sections: Characteristics, acquired and innate; methodologies; relationships with peers, children, parents and administration; middle school/junior high characteristics, philosophies, and psychologies; teacher values and social/moral issues; and Social studies curriculum and evaluation.

The various sub-topics of data presented in this section could often fit into more than one category. As the subjects talked about one area, they would often stray into other areas. It was up to the researcher to choose which major category the data best fit. This was strictly a judgment call, as much of the descriptive topics and dialogue could fit in more than one category.

Quotations from the subjects were utilized to provide a rich description in order to enter the world of good middle level social studies teachers. These quotations provided the basis for the presentation of the data along with the researcher's reflections and experiences. The next chapter will be an analysis of the data, comparing the literature with the subjects' responses and comparing the responses of the subjects with each other in order to see the areas of agreement and disagreement. The data will be analyzed in the three major areas: incompetent, average and good middle level social studies teachers. The good teacher section will be further analyzed in terms of: characteristics; methodologies; relationships; middle/junior high characteristics, philosophies, psychologies; teacher values and moral/social issues/ social studies curriculum and evaluation.

## CHAPTER V

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Chapter Five presents an analysis of the data that was presented in Chapter Four. The data will be compared to the existing literature on middle level education, social studies, and effective teaching techniques. The subject's responses will also be compared with each other.

The data analysis will be broken down in terms of areas of agreement and disagreement. There will be three major categories of discussion: Incompetent, Average, and Good middle level social studies teachers. The good teacher category will be broken down further in terms of: Acquired and innate characteristics, methodologies, middle/junior high characteristics; teacher values and moral/social issues; social studies curriculum and evaluation.

#### The Incompetent Teacher

##### Areas of Agreement

In the literature, Briggs (1986) mentioned six different characteristics of the incompetent teacher. All of the teachers interviewed discussed all six areas; failure to maintain discipline, failure to treat students properly, failure to impart subject matter effectively, failure to accept teaching advice from superiors, failure

to demonstrate mastery in the subject matter being taught, and failure to produce the intended or desired results.

The teachers interviewed basically placed the incompetent teacher in three categories: the teacher who does not care for the students, the teacher who lacks the knowledge, teaching skills and psychology of middle school students, and the incompetent teacher who has too much or not enough control. One of the teachers had experienced an incompetent teacher who would not accept help from her or the administration and was content to remain incompetent.

The veteran teachers also found that administrators were lax in dismissing incompetent teachers. It was often the good effective teacher who was responsible for informing the administration of the incompetent teacher and what was going on in that person's classroom. Several of the teachers felt that administrators were responsible for letting the incompetent teachers "slip through the cracks" and get tenure.

Briggs' (1986) indicated that only five percent of the teachers were incompetent, and the teachers interviewed agreed that they had met few incompetent teachers.

Several of the good teachers mentioned that an incompetent teacher is one who also "teaches to the test," and has no regard for helping students acquire social skills or learning skills.

### Areas of Disagreement

The literature indicated that the incompetent teacher lacked discipline. However, one of the veteran teachers believed that the incompetent teachers had too much discipline and only allowed the kids to sit in their seats and be quiet. They had complete control over the class, in fact they were too control oriented, allowing for no student autonomy.

While most of the teachers interviewed agreed that the incompetent teachers were not knowledgeable in their subject, one of the teachers interviewed thought that these teachers often did know their subject matter, but has no idea of who they are teaching or what they are teaching. This educator believed that the incompetent teacher did teach the material, but the teacher's attitude was, "I'm going to do my job, you can either learn it or not... I don't care."

### The Average Teacher

#### Areas of Agreement

Since no literature was found that specifically dealt with the average teacher, the subjects' responses will be compared with each other.

Two basic categories of average middle level social studies teachers were described by the good teachers; the first type imparts

the subject matter to the students and uses a traditional teaching style; the second type comes in, does the job, goes home, and does not have much interaction with the students, is average in all aspects.

Other characteristics agreed upon by the teachers interviewed were that the average teacher had the students do a lot of work using the text book, and answering the questions at the end of the chapter. They show a lot of films, but do not use a variety of teaching tools. This teacher often follows a set routine and is not a risk taker.

#### Areas of Disagreement

Two of the teachers felt that average teachers were the same as incompetent teachers, there was no in-between. Both teachers felt that a teacher is either good or not.

#### The Good Teacher

#### Characteristics: Acquired

#### Areas of Agreement

The teachers interviewed in this study indicated that it was important to get to know their students on a personal level and have

personal interaction with them. The literature did not mention this, but most of the teachers interviewed felt this was an important acquired characteristic.

The effective teaching literature and subjects agree that there are certain acquired characteristics that help make teachers more effective in the classroom. One teacher felt that teachers are born with certain innate characteristics for teaching, but they still have to know the methodology if they are going to be effective, they have to acquire certain teaching skills. The veteran teachers agreed with Eisner (1985) that the good teacher is constantly monitoring activity and adjusting. The veteran teachers called this flexibility, and all thought it was important to adjust their curriculum to the current events that were taking place in the world. All felt that it was important to throw out the lesson plan if something was happening in the world that would be more beneficial for the students to learn. Doda (1993) agreed saying that the good teacher uses those "teachable moments."

Most agreed with Brophy and Good (1986) that good social studies teachers set goals, and Doda (1991) concurs that the good teacher teaches with an end in mind. The majority of the teachers interviewed did not have detailed lesson plans, but all had definite goals and knew the objectives for each study unit. They are very knowledgeable in what they teach and they know different strategies to make social studies an interesting, fun subject. The veteran teachers all believe in using a higher order of thinking skills

which Brophy and Good (1986) thought was characteristic of the good teacher.

Brophy and Good (1986) also thought it was important to integrate the subject matter into other curricular areas; most of the teachers interviewed who touched on this area agreed, and most to a large degree since the majority believe in team or interdisciplinary teaching.

Cornbleth (1985) sees the good social studies teacher as teaching critical thinking skills. All of the teachers interviewed agreed that critical thinking is an important skill to teach students. The sixth grade social studies teacher is teaching her younger kids higher order thinking by utilizing essay questions on tests.

Another acquired characteristic that was not mentioned in the literature was that the good social studies teachers were constantly going to school, attending workshops or in-service, and reading a lot of materials related to their subject. They were continually seeking new knowledge and searching for new and better teaching methods. All but one of the teachers interviewed placed great emphasis on the importance of keeping up with their subject matter and keeping current in their field.

All of the teachers in this study belonged to professional organizations, and seven of the eight were very active in these organizations. Most believed this was essential to their professionalism. All belonged to their local, state and national teacher unions, and three of the teachers interviewed were active

delegates at the state and national conventions. They all were strong advocates of professionalism in teaching.

### Areas of Disagreement

Alexander (1959) says the good teacher is prepared and does a lot of planning. This was not the case with all of the subjects. Some were more, "off the cuff" teachers, who threw out the curriculum and would teach about what was going on in the world that day. They know that social studies teachers must be more flexible because of the impact current events has on their curriculum.

Doyle (1977) said there is a high level of student work with low level student interruptions. Few of the teachers agree with this. Students do a lot of work, but there are a lot of student interruptions in the good social studies classroom as these teachers are constantly interacting with the students and encouraging this interaction. There is often a high noise level, and all of the teachers interviewed agreed they like a lot of activity and noise in their room.

Armento (1991) found little difference in the social studies teachers of today and twenty years ago. This agrees with what the good teachers think of the incompetent or average social studies teacher, but not with the good one. The good teachers are constantly searching for new methodologies and strategies and do not use the methods that were used twenty years ago.

## Characteristics: Innate

### Areas of Agreement

Oliver and Shaver (1966/1974) found that one of the innate characteristics of the good social studies teachers is that they are open minded and willing to explore new ideas. The teachers interviewed agreed, as they were all very open minded and willing to discuss most things with their students. If they were not able to discuss certain subjects or explore new ideas, it was because they were prohibited from doing so by their school district. Poos (personal communication, May 9, 1994) agreed that the good teacher was one that made the students feel emancipated and free to express their opinions.

Doda (1993) says that the good teachers "do love," and Wong (1991) says that good teachers are caring, warm and loving. This is certainly an innate characteristic of the good teachers I interviewed. They all had an abundant amount of love for their students and none, male or female, were afraid to show that love. Doda (1993) also says that good teachers have fun. This innate characteristic was displayed in all of the subjects as they revealed their methodologies. They were all fun people who seemed to get the most out of life. In addition, they were personable people, very easy to talk with. A few of the interviews were conducted in the teachers rooms, and these

rooms reflected the teachers' personalities; they were fun rooms, and student oriented with lots of projects and student work displayed.

Van Manen (1990) agreed that the good teacher, or pedagogue, has a tremendous love of children and that s/he develops a relationship with them. The good teacher also has high morals, and this was illustrated not only in his/her dialogue, but in the observations that I made of the good middle level social studies teachers.

Van Manen (1990) further believes that the pedagogue is very sensitive towards children. This was an innate characteristic found in all of the teachers interviewed, and all agreed that loving and caring for children was a very critical part of their job, especially with the middle level child. The good middle level social studies teacher is aware of the psychological development of their students and are sensitive to his/her needs and mood swings.

Finally Van Manen (1990) said that the good teacher is a risk taker. Every one of the subjects agreed with this. If teachers fail to take risks, they become stagnant, and this stagnation leads to mediocrity.

Poos (personal communication, May 9, 1994) also described the good teacher as one who is not cool or aloof. From my observations of the subjects and from the data collected in my interviews, I found that none of the subjects were cool or aloof. All were very warm and possessed that "certain aura" that Poos used when describing the good teacher.

All of the teachers talked about and displayed high energy levels and were highly visible individuals. Brophy (1986) found this to be one of the innate characteristics of the good teacher. The good social studies teacher is not one who fades into the woodwork; this is the teacher who is a mover and a shaker, and everyone in the school knows this teacher, and most students want to be in this person's class. This agrees with Stanley's (1991) description of the two teachers he had observed when doing a study on teacher behaviors.

All of the teachers interviewed were enthusiastic and had a great deal of excitement for teaching and for the subject they taught. This agrees with the beliefs of McKinney and Larkins' (1982) research that indicated that students learned best from those teachers who displayed this enthusiasm in the classroom

### Areas of Disagreement

Leming (1991) was quoted as saying that there was no evidence linking student learning outcomes to teacher characteristics. Most of the teachers interviewed disagreed with this. Almost all felt that the good social studies teacher was teaching morals, values, and social issues, whereas the average and incompetent teachers were not. The good teachers were teaching these things by their actions and by the innate characteristics that they have in their personalities. This is the one area that makes a big difference between being an average and a good middle level social studies

teacher. Most felt that teacher characteristics were a vital part of the success of students. The good middle level social studies teacher often teaches things that cannot be measured by standard educational methods; the average teacher (and sometime the incompetent one) only teaches the subject matter, not the moral and social issues.

Another area of disagreement is that Brophy (1986) sees the effective teacher as having a more businesslike personality. This was certainly not the case of the subjects of this study. All of the teachers were about a hundred and eighty degrees away from a businesslike personality. None of them displayed this type of personality, nor did any of them think such a personality would be effective for teaching middle level social studies.

Brophy (1986) also believed the classroom should be very structured, and there should be a great deal of classroom management. The teachers interviewed were unstructured for the most part, and did not feel the need to spend a great deal of time on classroom management. Their personalities were easy going, and they felt that having this characteristic was more effective for the way they taught and managed their classes.

## Methodologies

### Areas of Agreement

The research indicated that the primary methodologies for social studies were recitation, discussion, use of textbooks, games and simulations, and group work. All of these were used by the subjects as primary teaching tools, except for recitation.

The primary method used by the teachers interviewed was cooperative learning. Each of the teachers interviewed were very knowledgeable in the differences between cooperative learning and group learning. The veteran teachers indicated that this was one of the most effective teaching methods used by good middle level social studies teachers today.

Inquiry was a tool used by several of the teachers interviewed but was not mentioned in the literature as a primary method. However, the inquiry method was employed part of the time through discussion, which was mentioned in the literature.

The good middle level social studies teachers used a lot of games and simulations in their teaching. These were games such as the stock market game and Risk. Most of the teachers interviewed did simulations, mock trials, mock congresses, and case studies.

Most of the teachers interviewed did not use the textbook, agreeing with Applebee, Langer and Mullins' (1987) research that only five percent of the history students in U.S. History classes did

not use textbooks. One of the teachers interviewed agreed, in part, with White's (1988) description of social studies texts, saying that they were biased, bland, superficial, and dull; one respondent added, the words, banal, boring, nebulous, general chunks of lacking information, to the list of adjectives describing social studies texts.

Several of the subjects felt that the good middle level social studies teachers were using a taxonomy system, such as Bloom's Taxonomy. Gall (1970 & 1984) found that only twenty percent of the questions asked by social studies teachers were based on higher level thinking skills, indicating that some of the teachers were probably using some sort of taxonomy system or higher order thinking skills. The subjects felt that this was an important teaching skill and should be utilized.

#### Areas of Disagreement

Gross and Badger (1960) found that most social studies teachers, even at the lower grade levels, use lecture as their primary method of instruction. The teachers interviewed agreed that this is true for the average or incompetent social studies teacher, but not for the good social studies teacher, especially the one at the middle school level. The good middle level social studies teacher knows that the lecture method is ineffective, that learning must be active, not passive, especially in the lower grades.

Goodlad (1984) believes that social studies is associated with authority, memorization, and passive activities. While this may be the picture of the average or incompetent social studies teacher, it is not the picture of the veteran teachers who were interviewed for this study.

## Relationships

### Areas of Agreement

Much of the literature revealed little about the relationships that teachers have with peers, administrators, or parents. If relationships were mentioned, it was in terms of the student-teacher relationships.

All of the teachers interviewed indicated that they were interested in the welfare of their students. This agrees with Van Manen's (1990) literature on the effective pedagogue. Van Manen also talked about walking with the children, not leading them or pushing them. The subjects of this study do just that. They lead in a directive way, as mentioned by one of the teachers interviewed who used the metaphor of the rider on a horse, but they do not have a tight hold on the reins. Students are free to explore with the teachers, but the teachers are more like colleagues, not good buddies or best friends, but colleagues who explore knowledge together.

All of the teachers interviewed felt it was important to have good relationships with their peers. Several of the teachers interviewed had gone to an administrator about an incompetent teacher, but they did not view that as being negative towards their peers; they viewed it as helping the students and their school as a whole.

The teachers interviewed also felt interaction with peers was important. All of them had done some team teaching and several of those from middle schools had used the interdisciplinary team concept. None viewed themselves as an island; they did not stand alone. They worked with their peers for the good of all students, not just those they taught.

Most of the interviewees knew the importance of having good relationships with their administrators. Not all had the good relationships, however, especially if the administrator was traditional.

A number of the teachers interviewed indicated that they did not have much respect for their administrators, and two of the subjects did not have much respect for the school boards in their district.

### Areas of Disagreement

There was one area of disagreement in the area of relationships. This area of disagreement was among the teachers

interviewed and not with the literature. Some of the teachers interviewed felt that parents were difficult and did not like to deal with them. Others felt that good parental relationships, using good communication skills, were essential to the success of the student.

### Middle/Junior High Organization

#### Areas of Agreement

Most of the teachers interviewed agreed with each other and with the literature about middle level education. Most agreed with the idea of interdisciplinary or team teaching. One of the educators mentioned that the middle schools in Oklahoma were simply junior highs with middle school names.

A majority agreed with Gatewood and Dilg (1975) to some extent that the following characteristics needed to be in the middle school organization: program adapted to pre and early adolescents, wide range of experiences, opportunities for exploration and development of skills, climate conducive to adolescents, staff members who understand needs of this grade level, need for smooth transition from elementary to middle school, environment conducive to success for the student, guidance in the development of attitudes and citizenship, competent instructors in both subject and middle level organization, and the facilities and time to help students achieve.

Two of the subjects mentioned the importance of knowing the developmental theories of Piaget and Erikson. They felt this was critical for being an effective middle level teacher.

Doda (1981) said there were five categories necessary for teaching in middle school: Community, where the students have a sense of belonging; Caring, where teachers care and kids don't slip through the cracks; Connectedness, where students can find a sense of belonging, based on interests, not on age or grade; Color, the spice of the middle schools, extra curricular activities and exploratory classes; and Collaboration, where the teachers join "heads and hearts" to create an effective school. One of the subjects mentioned some of these middle school traits, but did use the same terminology. This educator talked about the importance of community, caring, connectedness, and collaboration in the middle school organization.

Two of the teachers interviewed taught in a junior high made up of grades eight and nine. This district also had a middle school made up of sixth and seventh grade. Another respondent had a similar set up in his community, but he taught at the middle school rather than the junior high. The two junior high teachers did not have interdisciplinary teaching units or teams, but they did do some team teaching with others in the building.

### Areas of Disagreement

The only area of disagreement was what age level should be in the middle school. Some felt it should be grades six, seven and eight, others thought sixth grade should be in elementary. One teacher felt that it might not be a bad idea to have separate sixth and seventh grade learning centers.

### Moral and Social Issues/Values

#### Areas of Agreement

Most of the good middle level social studies teachers valued their students, the relationship they had with their students, the success of their students, and the effect they had on their students. They held their values in high regard.

The teachers all agreed that they should teach values and social issues, but not "preach" these things. The moral and social issues they felt were most important were citizenship, honesty and integrity. Several agreed with Leming (1991) that the values of social studies are not internalized immediately.

One of the teachers interviewed felt it was necessary to start teaching students to ask the "right questions." He believed if teachers could accomplish this they could instill good and moral

thoughts into the young people. He saw the middle school as the place where this should be done.

Other moral and social issues that the good teachers believed should be taught to our students are human dignity, hope for the future, and the value of people.

### Areas of Disagreement

Only one of the teachers interviewed believed that he should not teach moral and social values per se; he believed, however, he should set an example by practicing good ethical and moral traits. He believed he was a good role model and was hopeful the students would see the importance of ethical, moral and social values and would want to follow the example he set.

### Social Studies Curriculum

#### Areas of Agreement

All of the teachers interviewed believed that their curriculum was an essential part of middle level education. They all had a high regard for the social studies. Two of the subjects believed that social studies was the heart of the school.

All felt that citizenship was the most important result of social studies. Additionally, social studies gives a sense of who we are, where we come from, and an appreciation for other cultures.

All of the teachers interviewed had a curriculum guideline that they followed. None of them were told how to teach, but they all felt they were responsible for covering the curriculum provided by the district.

### Areas of Disagreement

One of the teachers interviewed said he would not care if they took some of the subjects out of the social studies curriculum. However, none of the other subjects commented on this.

### Evaluation

#### Areas of Agreement

Most of the teachers were traditional in their methods of evaluation, using tests, homework, projects, and participation in class as a way of evaluating their students.

The veteran teachers all used essay questions when testing their students in an effort to rush their students into higher levels of thinking.

Most of the teachers interviewed agreed with Leming (1991) when he said that the outcomes of social studies instruction are often not measurable in educational terms.

Two of the teachers agreed that there was little value in standardized testing, and one of the teachers verbalized a dislike for Outcomes Based Education.

### Areas of Disagreement

There was only one area of disagreement. One of the subjects was a strong advocate of the portfolio system, while another subject felt it was not an effective system to use for middle level students.

## SUMMARY

The qualitative, long interview was a good method to investigate the qualities and characteristics of the good middle level social studies teachers, however, there were some problems. Since there is no standard mold for the good middle level social studies teacher, it was difficult to analyze the data. The purpose of this project was not to find a specific mold for the good middle level social studies teacher, but rather to find the similar or like characteristics, as described by the teachers interviewed, that made them effective teachers.

The literature review was divided into three sections, making it difficult to compare the literature with the subjects' answers.

The literature was used to some extent in the data analysis, but was more beneficial for the background information and in preparing the questionnaire for the long interviews.

In spite of the limitations, I do believe that this research provides useful insight into the world of the effective middle level social studies teacher. While the innate characteristics cannot be replicated in the individual teachers, the acquired skills, knowledge of subject matter, methodologies, the importance of relationships, the importance of knowing the psychology of the middle level adolescent, the middle school philosophy, the importance of teaching moral/social issues and values through role modeling and moral dilemma discussions, and the value of the social studies curriculum can be learned and can be taught in colleges, in-service programs and workshops dealing with the social studies.

This study has been enlightening and reaffirming for me. I felt all the subjects were well chosen, and they certainly represent their profession well and truly deserve the title of "good middle level social studies educators" in the state of Oklahoma.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Six will summarize the major aspects of this study, report the findings and conclusions, discuss recommendations for further study and final provide comments.

#### SUMMARY

This study sought to compare and contrast the differences and likenesses of teaching practices of the good middle level social studies teacher. A qualitative, naturalistic study, using McCracken's (1988) methods of the long interview, Erlandson, et al's (1993) method of naturalistic study, and Van Manen's (1990) method of phenomenological descriptive research, was used to enter the world of the good middle level social studies teachers in an effort to find what made them good or effective middle level social studies teachers. A study such as this is important because social studies, especially at the middle school level, is often not taken seriously by the students, teachers or administrators. If social studies is going to remain a part of the middle school curriculum, then average and poor teachers either need to be replaced or learn better methods of teaching. The good middle level social studies teacher provides excellent examples that would enhance any teacher's classroom performance.

Chapter One introduced the outline structure of the study. It presented: (1) an introduction, (2) the background of the problem which revealed that social studies students often find the subject nothing but a boring subject reduced to the memorization of facts and data, (3) the research problem that revealed the lack of research on the effective middle level social studies teacher, and (4) the plan of study which revealed the methodology of McCracken (1988), Erlandson, et al. (1993) and Van Manen (1990), and a brief synopsis of each chapter of the research project.

Chapter Two presented a review of the literature related to effective middle level social studies teachers. The literature was reviewed in three sections: (1) middle level educational characteristics, philosophies and psychologies, (2) social studies educational research and (3) research on effective teachers in various subjects and grade levels.

Chapter Three discussed the: (1) method of study that was used for the project, (2) research approval, IRB number, and introduction to the methodology, (3) research process that was used in the study, (4) expertise and research bias of the researcher, (5) demographics of the subjects used in the study, (6) selection process for the subjects, and (7) presentation of the subjects.

Chapter Four presented the data on the incompetent, average and good middle level social studies teachers as described by the subjects of the study. The data on the good middle level social studies teacher was divided into six categories; (1) characteristics,

acquired and innate, (2) methodologies, (3) relationships with students, peers, parents, and administrators, (4) middle school/junior high philosophies, psychologies and structure, (5) teacher values and moral and social issues, and (6) social studies curriculum and evaluation.

Chapter Five presented the analysis of the data. The data were analyzed and compared to the existing literature on good middle level social studies teachers and effective teaching techniques. The subjects' responses were also compared with each other. The data analysis was broken down in terms of areas of agreement and disagreement, using the three major categories of incompetent, average and good middle level social studies teachers. The good teacher category was further broken down and analyzed in terms of: characteristics; methodologies; relationships; middle level philosophies, psychologies and structure; teacher values and moral and social issues; and social studies curriculum and evaluation.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Significant differences and likenesses were observed between the subjects used in this study; however, the likenesses were the primary focus. As a means of comparison, the subjects were asked to describe the incompetent and average middle level social studies teacher. The compiled data revealed that the subjects viewed the incompetent teacher in three ways: (1) those who do not care for

children and who do not have a personal relationship with them and may even damage them at this vulnerable age; (2) those who lack the proper subject matter, teaching skills, and middle school philosophy and psychology; and (3) those who have either too much or not enough control over their classes.

Next, the teachers described the average middle level social studies teacher. They felt this teacher was one who: (1) did impart the knowledge to the students, (2) used traditional teaching methods, including a lot of worksheets and textbook materials, usually following a traditional paradigm, and (3) did his/her job from eight to three (or whatever time) and went home. These teachers also had very little personal interaction with the children.

Four major themes are clear from the results of this study. Good middle level social studies teachers: (1) have a tremendous love for the students they teach. They are warm, personable educators who enjoy being with their students and enjoy the job they do in the classroom; (2) have a good grasp of their subject matter and tend to incorporate social and moral values with their subject matter; take risks when they teach and are highly motivated individuals who know how to motivate their students; (3) do not use traditional teaching methods; they are intuitive and flexible; (4) are concerned not only for themselves, but also for their profession.

In addition to the four major themes, the good middle level social studies teacher felt that the following traits and characteristics were also part of being good in the profession:

- Excellent teaching skills and methodologies
- Knowledgeable in their subject matter
- Deep feelings for students, a great concern for their welfare and well-being
- Educationally oriented, constantly going to school, workshops, in-service, to improve their methodology and knowledge base
- Avid readers and keep up with current events
- Strongly committed to their profession
- Know if they are going to make a difference in young people's life it will be in the classroom
- Enthusiastic
- Energetic
- Non-conformists
- Risk takers
- Fun
- Outgoing, extroverts
- Creative
- Intuitive
- Good actors, entertainers
- Flexible
- Motivators
- Good role models
- Good communicators
- Know students on a personal level
- Value the students they teach, the effect they have on students, their interaction with students,
- Value education and the future
- Value the differences in people
- Honest with a high degree of integrity
- Believe in human dignity for all races, sexes, creeds, religions
- Value the differences of others
- Knowledgeable of the philosophy, psychology and characteristics of the middle level student
- Believe standardized testing is a waste of the taxpayers money and should not be used as an evaluation tool
- Value social studies as the heart of the middle school curriculum
- Teach or exemplify high morals, standards,

and social skills

- Use modern methodologies of teaching such as cooperative learning, inquiry, games and simulations, mocks trials case study, discussion, research and study skills, and Bloom's Taxonomy
- Prefer noise and lots of interaction with the students
- Non-structured in a traditional sense, but know their objectives and work to meet those objectives

All of the subjects used in this study viewed the world of the effective middle level social studies teacher in a different way. The conclusion I have drawn from this is that this individuality, this eclecticism, and uniqueness is what makes them outstanding teachers. They do not conform, they take risks, they are different. These teachers rely on a great deal of intuition and their high energy level to make them good in their field; they are highly motivated and good at motivating their students.

While some of these characteristics are innate, there are some acquired skills that I believe, based on the information I have gathered from this study, will help the average and incompetent teacher improve their teaching techniques. These are the use of good methodologies, and taking the time to go to school and learn more about their field. As one respondent said, "Teaching is a craft," indicating that there are certain parts of teaching that can be learned. Another respondent said that these skills have to be practiced if one has the inclination to do so. So while I feel this study shows that there are certain innate characteristics that cannot be replicated, there are certain skills and methodologies that may enhance a teacher's presentation skills and effectiveness. If changes

are going to be made in the social studies classroom, it will have to be in acquired characteristics, knowledge of the subject, and better methodologies. It is important that the teachers teach more than subject matter; in social studies they must teach and demonstrate, through their own behavior, moral and social values that lead to good citizenship.

Higher education instructors who are teaching teachers need to examine what they are teaching their students. Are they sending them into the middle level classroom with just subject matter? If so, this is not enough.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH, PRACTICE AND TEACHER PREPARATION

This study reveals that more research is needed in the area of social studies teaching, not only at the middle level, but also the elementary and high school level. In today's schools there are too many social studies teachers who pass out worksheets, tell the students to read the chapter and do the questions at the end, or show movies three days a week; these are the teachers who make social studies a subject that is often boring and lessen its value as a subject. Social studies can be an exciting subject, but if unqualified teachers (often coaches at the middle and high school levels) are going to teach the subject, the implications are that the *status quo* for social studies will remain. This means that students will continue to view social studies as a boring subject, reduced to the memorization of facts and dates.

If social studies is to survive, administrators must put more value on the subject and realize the importance that social studies plays in the everyday lives of the citizens, and that citizenry begins with a good social studies background. Allowing mediocre teaching in the social studies classroom only serves to alienate the students and defeats the purpose of teaching the subject in the first place. At a time when our nation faces many problems as a result of changing values or morals, administrators must start viewing social studies as part of the curriculum necessary to bring about changes in children's attitudes toward society.

Colleges of education owe it to the future teachers to ensure they are well prepared to teach social studies. Social studies and methodology professors need to look at what they are teaching their students and if they are instilling the importance of the subject as well as the teaching skills needed to teach this complex subject. They need to instill value of good methodology and to ensure that future teachers will not push worksheets in front of the students and show movies three days a week. A teacher can no longer be a paper-pusher if s/he is going to be effective. Today's classroom teacher, in all subjects, is competing with the entertainment media. We cannot make a difference in the classroom if we cannot make our courses fun, exciting, and most of all challenging.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This study was limited to a certain grade level and a certain subject matter. The long interview was the only research tool, and the only observations of the subjects were made at the time of the interviews. The following are recommended for further study:

- Study interdisciplinary teaching in the social studies.
- Study using the various other subjects at the middle school level or other grade levels.
- Study to explore the effect of good social studies teachers at other grade levels.
- Study interviewing both average and good social studies teachers to get information from both sides.
- Study interviewing both students, teachers and administrators to get all three views of good/effective teachers.
- Study using gender as a variable.
- Study combining both the long interview and observations of the teacher in the classroom.
- Study teachers who peers or administrators have identified as weak or incompetent.

## FINAL COMMENTS

As an educator, I believe teachers owe it to the students and to the profession to be the best we can be. Many school districts are using peer teaching as a way to improve the skills and the teaching crafts in others. While this study dealt only with one subject and one level of students, it can be used as a guide to enhance the teaching methodologies of many social studies teachers who simply do not know that there are better ways to present social studies materials.

When I received my Bachelor's degree, I thought I knew all there was to know about education and how to present the material to my students. I had a rude awakening when I started my master's degree, for I learned new teaching skills that I never even dreamed of. Then when I started working on my doctorate, I learned even more not about just teaching, but about the tact of pedagogy. Maybe there are social studies teachers in the classroom who have never taken any additional training other than in-service.

While this study has shown there are a great many of innate characteristics that many good middle level social studies teachers possess, there are many teaching skills and methodologies that can be learned. To be more effective in the classroom, teachers must do more than attend an occasional in-service program, they must become involved with professional organizations, read educational journals, attend summer workshops and take graduate courses that will enhance their teaching performance.

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## APPENDIX A

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 02-23-94

IRB#: ED-94-064

Proposal Title: CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD MIDDLE SCHOOL SOCIAL  
STUDIES TEACHERSPrincipal Investigator(s): ~~John Steinbrink~~, Claudia Lynne Moyers

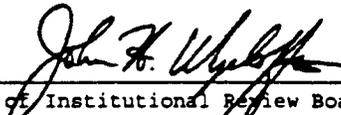
Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): ~~Approved~~APPROVAL STATUS SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT  
MEETING.APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR  
RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL. ANY MODIFICATIONS  
TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

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Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for  
Deferral or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature:

  
Chair of Institutional Review Board

Date: March 4, 1994

APPENDIX B  
QUESTIONNAIRE

Date:

Place of interview:

Time: Start            End

Assessment of rapport: Lo 1 2 3 4 5 HI

Tape #            Began    End

Transcribed by

Gender: M    F    Size of school district \_\_\_\_\_ size of  
community \_\_\_\_\_

1. In what year were you born?
2. Where were you born?
3. Where were you raised?
4. What is/was your parent's occupations?  
Father:  
Mother:
5. Do you have any brothers and/or sisters? What are their  
current occupations?
6. Where was your early schooling?
7. Where did you attend middle school?
8. Where did you attend high school?
9. Where did you attend college?
10. What was your major? Minor?
11. Have you attended any graduate school? If yes, when, where,  
and what degrees were conferred?
12. Would you like to tell about your family?
13. Do you have any hobbies or special interests?
14. How long have you been teaching?
15. What school systems have you taught in?
16. Have you ever considered going into administration?
17. If you were not teaching, what do you think you would like  
to do as a career?
18. What grades do you teach? What subjects?

## APPENDIX B (continued)

## Open-ended Questions

19. How would you describe a good or effective social studies teacher?
20. Compare a good social studies teacher to an average one.
21. Compare a good social studies teacher to an incompetent one.
22. How do you decide what to teach?
23. How do you evaluate your students?
24. What teaching methods do you use?
25. How do you keep current in your field?
26. What do you value as a teacher?
27. What moral and social values would you want to teach your students?
28. The school board has decided to cut social studies totally out of the school system. What would you say to them to get them to change their minds?
29. Tell me more about---
30. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

APPENDIX C  
NON-TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Biographical questions are the same as the ones used in Appendix B.

1. Describe a good middle level social studies' teacher.
2. Describe an average middle level social studies' teacher.
3. Describe an incompetent middle level social studies' teacher.
4. How do the good, average and incompetent middle school teachers present their material?
5. What do good middle level social studies' teachers value?
6. What moral and social issues, if any, should the good middle level social studies' teacher teach?
7. Why is it important to teacher social studies' at the middle school level?

## APPENDIX D

**CONSENT FORM**

(To be read by respondent and discussed with interviewer before the beginning of the interview. One copy of this form will be left with the respondent, and one copy will be signed by the respondent and kept by the interviewer. After the original tapes are transcribed, the original audio tapes will be destroyed.)

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize or direct Claudia Lynne Moyers to perform the procedures described below.

This study is being conducted as part of an investigation entitled FROM TEACHER TO PEDAGOGUE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF GOOD MIDDLE LEVEL SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATORS. The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of good middle level social studies teachers by using the long interview method. Respondents will be asked to answer a number of questions. The interview will be taped electronically and transcribed by the researcher.

I understand that participation is strictly voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withhold my participation in this project at any time. I also understand that I am free to refuse to answer any question(s) at any time.

This interview will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to the researcher and members of the researcher's doctoral committee.

Excerpts of this interview may be made part of the final research report, but under no circumstances will your name, school district, or any identifying characteristics be included in this report.

I may contact Claudia Lynne Moyers at telephone number (918) 749-9646. I may also contact University Research Services, 001 Life Sciences East, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078, telephone number (405) 744-5700.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ (am/pm)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Respondent's Signature

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the respondent before requesting the respondent to sign it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Claudia Lynne Moyers, Project Coordinator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

2

Claudia Lynne Moyers

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Dissertation: FROM TEACHER TO PEDAGOGUE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF GOOD MIDDLE LEVEL SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATORS IN OKLAHOMA.

Major Field: Curriculum and Instruction

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Hot Springs, Arkansas, on February 26, 1947, the daughter of Calhoun and Evelyn Baker.

Education: Graduated from McLain High School, Tulsa, Oklahoma in May, 1965; received Bachelor of Science of Education in speech and drama from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas in January, 1970. Received the Master of Science Degree of Education with a major in Junior College Education, language arts and communications, at Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma in May 1982. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree with a major in curriculum and instruction at Oklahoma State University in December 1994.

Experience: Employed by Sand Springs Public Schools as a junior high school teacher for five years, Tulsa Public Schools as a middle school teacher for seven years. Concurrent adjunct speech instructor, Tulsa Junior College for ten years.

Professional Memberships: Association for Curriculum and Development, and National Middle School Association,