

STATE MANDATED TESTS, STATE STANDARDS, AND INSTRUCTIONAL CHOICE-
PERILS OF GATEKEEPING IN THE CURRENT EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

By

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(Under the Direction of Hilary Conklin)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the impact of state mandated testing on 8th-12th grade social studies teachers, using the Thornton's principle of gatekeeping as a theoretical framework. The focus of this study is to explore two research questions: 1. How do state mandated tests influence social studies teachers' curricular, instructional, and assessment choices? 2. What is the relationship between standardization and social studies teachers' gatekeeping role? The research is grounded in a variety of different research fields including the general impact of high stakes testing, assessment, policy, and teacher decision-making literature. A mixed methods approach is used, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods. Questionnaires were given to all 8th-12th-grade teachers in one small Georgia County. Interviews were then conducted to create a bounded case study. Participants were selected to represent different subject matters, locations, and levels of teaching experience all possible factors that could affect how state mandated tests influence social studies teachers. Major findings of the study reveal the test is creating a hierarchy of content at the high school level, that content is being narrowed given the amount of standards and time given to teach the required material, assessment practices are being altered as formative assessment is becoming less important in

informing instruction, instructional practices limit student involvement and tend to be more teacher driven and teachers are unable to be true gatekeepers. The conclusions derived from this study are teachers are making decisions that they would not otherwise make if there were no test and gatekeeping cannot truly be realized given the demands of the test. Additionally the study illuminates a need to further investigate the roles teachers are taking given the state mandate tests, the decision that are being made and how teachers can guard their decision making power. Finally, the study provides suggestions for teacher educators on how to prepare future teachers to meet the demands of state mandated testing.

INDEX WORDS: State Mandated Testing, High Stakes Testing, Gatekeeping, Teacher Decision Making, Educational Policy, No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

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DEDICATION

To all the teachers who inspired me to pursue this endeavor and to all the teachers who are currently facing the pressures of state mandated testing.

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Chapter 1- Introduction

The implementation of high stakes tests, in accordance with The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation has fundamentally altered the way educators, educational leaders, and educational researchers talk about education. Acronyms, like FTE, AYP, GHSGT, and EOCT¹ and words like standards, accountability and bubble students² all have become part of regular vocabulary. With this change in vocabulary, the role of teachers is also shifting. Curriculum policy has become a tool of the bureaucracy, making educational goals secondary and in turn changing the dynamics of teaching (Madaus & Kellegan, 1992). While teachers should have an essential role in curriculum policy, their role is becoming limited as fundamental decisions about what should be taught and assessed have already been made. Although there have been definitive changes in how curriculum policy is used and the way it is discussed, the effect NCLB really has on education is still up for debate--especially in social studies.

NCLB calls for testing in mathematics, reading language arts, and science no less than once during grades 3 through 5, 6 through 9, and 10 through 12 (C. Res 107-110, section 3Av1). Social studies testing is not required by law, leaving social studies in a rather precarious situation. Social studies teachers are left questioning where social studies fits into the law. Ultimately, the greatest influence NCLB has on social studies seems to depend on the stakes each state ties to the tests and which subjects are tested. In Georgia these stakes are rather high: the Georgia Department of Education is suggesting that, by 2010 an End of Course Test (EOCT)

¹ FTE- Full Time Equivalent, AYP-Annual Yearly Progress, GHSGT- Georgia High School Graduation Test, EOCT- End of Course Test

² Bubble students refer to students that miss a basic or minimum score on a state mandated test by only a few points. These students are often targeted for help because they are close to passing the test.

based on state standards be administered in every subject at the high school level. U.S. History and Economics already have an EOCT. In Georgia, social studies is tested on the Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHS GT). These tests and the standards that govern them are a fundamental part of education. However, in this politically charged environment, teachers are often under attack with headlines such as, “Georgia Teachers Guilty of Grade Inflation” (Vogell, 2009) and “Gwinnett Teachers accused of CRCT cheating,” (Dodd, 2008) from the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* or “New York Measuring Teachers by Test Scores” (Medina, 2008) from the *New York Times*. It is essential that teachers understand how standards, tests, and educational policies affect their instructional choices and their gatekeeping role. Gatekeeping is a concept that suggests teachers should play an important role in implementing curriculum. While the exact impact of state mandated tests is riddled with complexities and conflicting data, I suggest that teachers have the power to be gatekeepers of the curriculum. However, external barriers such as the stakes of the tests, school environment, and teachers’ own belief system often stop them from making bold moves and taking control of their role as a gatekeeper.

The concept of gatekeeping in social studies “encompasses the decisions teachers make about curriculum and instruction and the criteria they use to make those decisions” (Thornton, 2005, p. 1). This decision-making is often guided by teachers’ personal experiences (Thornton, 1989). Although traditionally the teacher has been able to make “crucial decisions about content, sequence, and instructional strategy” (Thornton, 1989, p. 4), I argue that teachers’ power to make these decisions is being altered in light of standardization. In this study, I intend to explore the interaction of the gatekeeping role and instructional choices, built on Thornton’s (2005) framework. While the term gatekeeping may be foreign, the principle has a long history. Education philosopher Dewey (1916, 1929, 1933, 1938, 1991, 2008), curriculum theorists Tyler

(1949) and Snyder (1992), assessment experts Reeves (2007), Madaus (1992, 2007), Popham (2001), and policy expert Anderson (2003), to name a few, have suggested that teachers play an important role in the experiences students have in the classroom. However, in the current educational environment, the power teachers used to have over curriculum and instruction is shifting. These shifts are beginning to limit the power of teachers, but how limited is still in question. Cuban (2009) suggests that teachers are “hugging the middle”, but what does this mean in practice especially with regard to instructional choices?

Gatekeeping as a concept is described by a variety of authors from different backgrounds but the goal is clear: teachers should be curricular gatekeepers and should play an important role in designing curriculum. As a social studies teacher and future teacher educator, I believe it is important that research be conducted on the impact of state mandates--so teachers can be given tools to navigate the educational environment in which they teach. Social studies teachers need to understand the impact of state mandated tests so they can protect key ideas of social studies such as problem solving, citizenship, social justice, historical inquiry and critical thinking. Teacher educators need to explore the effect of state mandates so they can teach future teachers how to deal with the current mandated demands without compromising their rationale for social studies instruction. The key is to secure a place for social studies teachers and teacher educators to negotiate the current education system and help teachers maintain their gatekeeping status by understanding how the state mandates affect teachers' instructional choices and this essential role. Given this, I explore two fundamental questions in this study:

1. How do state mandated tests influence social studies teachers' curricular, instructional, and assessment choices?

2. What is the relationship between standardization and social studies teachers' gatekeeping role?

Theoretical Framework

The research questions, the literature review, the methods, and the data analysis in this study are all guided by Thornton's (2001) assumption that teachers are gatekeepers of the curriculum and it is their role to guide, rather than direct students, therefore “opening gates that students want to go through” and ultimately shaping the “meaning of social studies” (p. 107, 26). Gatekeeping gives power to the teacher to build curriculum that meets the needs of the individual students and ultimately allows social studies teachers to teach the type of social studies that really matters--social studies that is engaging, active, and based on core democratic values.

Historically, the teacher's role has been to create curriculum that focused on the individual and the community. However, in recent years curriculum development has been focused on high stakes tests, an important tool of public policy. This shift has fundamentally altered the decision making of teachers, thus changing the framework teachers use to make decisions about curriculum. Teachers are finding ways to manipulate the system and to meet the needs of state mandates without losing their professional integrity (Yeager and Davis, 2005)—an example of Thornton's (1991) gatekeeper role. However the power of teachers is being limited. The test dictates many aspects of a teacher's decision making, altering the teacher's ability to make important decisions about the knowledge that is of most worth and the experiences students need. Dewey (1938) suggests that it is the “business of the educator to see in what direction an experience is heading”(p. 38). I believe it would be difficult to find a teacher who did not want a curriculum that meets the needs of his/her students. However, state mandates encourage teachers to follow content guidelines set by the state that neglect the natural curiosities

of students (Thornton, 2001, p.25). To what extent this is occurring is still up for debate.

Thornton (2001) argues “the needs, interests, and aptitudes of students ought to be part of the aims talk if we are serious about “leaving no child behind” (p. 51).

Gatekeeping suggests teachers’ decision- making encompasses a variety of factors including each teacher’s understanding and approach to social studies instruction and his/her personal beliefs about the role of the student in the classroom (Thornton, 1998). These beliefs have the power to influence a teacher’s ability to make important decisions about the type of social studies that is occurring in the classrooms, including fundamental decisions about curriculum and instruction. According to Popham, NCLB “diverts educators' attention from genuinely important educational decisions,” such as the best instructional choices for a given topic (2001, p. 16). Instructional practices in today's environment are often reduced to skill and drill activities designed to help students pass the test, not to help our students learn (Popham, 2001). By guarding the gatekeeping role, these instructional choices remain in the hands of teachers--not driven by the inanimate test. This gatekeeping role, while coined by Thornton, is embedded in the work of John Dewey. I believe using this lens is essential to examining the relationship that exists between state mandates and teachers' instructional choices and ultimately their gatekeeping role.

Dewey

The importance of the gatekeeping role is tied to the type of experiences teachers want for students. Dewey’s work suggests the teacher is the one who makes decisions about the educational experiences of students. His work is built on the premise that teachers should know “the capacities, needs, and past experiences” of students so that they can direct the classroom experiences (1938, p. 71). This ability to connect the experiences of the students will in return

cause growth, which is an essential part of powerful teaching. Teachers' desires to engage students in curriculum drive their decision-making but the state mandated tests take some of that power away. Teachers need to be able to make decisions that are best for their students, so that both teacher and student can engage in the exploration of social studies content.

Dewey (1938) suggests that "the participation of the learner" is essential to creating powerful educational encounters (p. 67). The benefits of teacher/student-enacted curriculum are well documented. According to Dunn (1986), teacher relationships with students are improved if both teachers and students are involved in the curriculum process, which will increase opportunities for success. Hargreaves (1992) suggests that the right to negotiate what students learn is an essential element of schooling. The principle of student/teacher curriculum development is an important part of my own teaching practices and is worth protecting. A student's educational experience has strong ties to the teacher, therefore the connection between teacher decision-making and students is an essential part of this study. The state mandates are affecting the educational experiences our students have because teachers are unable to make decisions that are in the best interest of students, instead decisions that meet the needs of the test.

Dewey's (1916, 1933, 1938, 1991, 2008) focus is on the growth of the child. He suggests that teachers not only guide the curriculum but also are responsible for creating situations that lead to student success. His ideas are often misinterpreted because many assume that Dewey wanted a completely child-centered system where the students choose every aspect of the experience. However, Dewey explains that any experience can be mis-educative and that the child, while important, cannot be the only important factor. The experiences that Dewey wants are based on an interaction with the situation. The situation and experience are linked, so under the current system where the test is so oppressive, the test is impacting the power of the teacher

to create meaningful opportunities for students. A teacher's knowledge of content may help interpret what is best for the child (Dewey, 2008). Dewey (2008) suggests education is a process of "continuous reconstruction, moving from the child's present experiences out into that represented by organized bodies of truth that we call studies," or subjects (p. 11). Teachers need to take into account the subject and the students (Thornton, 2005). Teachers need to make these decisions and a prescribed curriculum or state mandates severely limits the power of the teacher to make decisions about what is worthwhile. This is a fundamental part of the gatekeeping philosophy. Both Thornton (2005) and Dewey (2008) suggest that prescribed curricula such as those associated with state mandated tests lose quality "when presented in external, ready made fashion" (p. 26). One of the main purposes of education is to "discover what values are worthwhile and what objectives are to be pursued" (Dewey, 1929, p. 71).

Thornton (2005) argues throughout his book that gatekeeping is the most important weapon in creating an active social studies curriculum that matters. One of the most important roles of social studies education is creating democratic citizens. Dewey (1916) argues, "a society which makes provisions for participation is good for all its members?" (p. 115). This democratic principle is key to Thornton's theory; education should not be limiting but inspiring (Dewey, 1929, Thornton, 2005). The state mandates can take power away from teachers and tend to border on the anti-democratic. Dewey (1933) suggests that a prescriptive curriculum can become a form of indoctrination. The teacher is the last line of defense in the educational process. The gatekeeping role is the key to this defense. Dewey argues throughout his work that teachers and students work together to build curriculum but ultimately it is the teacher who shapes experiences into ones that yield a desired result. The gatekeeping ideology is throughout the work of Dewey and is also present in the work of Ralph Tyler.

Curriculum Theorists: Tyler

Tyler (1949) suggests that studying the learner is essential when considering the learning objectives, and that students themselves should actively participate in the educational process; these ideas are major parts of gatekeeping. The Tyler (1949) approach emphasizes how educational leadership is responsible for setting the tone for curriculum development. Furthermore, this curriculum should be “flexible” (p. 100) and “curriculum planning is a continuous process that, as materials and procedures are developed, they are tried out, their results appraised, their inadequacies identified, suggested improvements indicated” (p. 123). This lens is essential to examining the key relationships between state mandates and what is occurring in classrooms. A guiding principle of gatekeeping is how teachers manage the curriculum based on what they believe—that is, if teachers see the test as an oppressive bureaucratic tool this impacts the teacher’s decisions. The teacher should have the power to make the necessary decisions about what is being done in classrooms.

Tyler's (1949) approach to curriculum is based on a belief that educational professionals need to be making important decisions about what is occurring in classrooms. From the beginning of the book, he states, “this small book attempts to explain a rationale for viewing, analyzing, and interpreting the curriculum and instruction program of an educational institution. It’s not a textbook...” (p. 1). Tyler’s rationale is a way of knowing versus a manual where the curriculum is “analyzed and interpreted” (p. 1). For Tyler all curriculum plans must begin with a study of the learner, much like Dewey’s ideas and ultimately the basis of Thornton’s (2005) premise that framework determines the type of instruction that occurs. Thornton’s (2005) gatekeeping is based on teachers’ “(1) aims, (2) subject matter and instructional methods, and (3) student interest” (p.11). These ideas are consistently found in the work of Tyler. Tyler (1949)

states, “it is essential to see that education provides opportunities for student to enter actively into, and to deal wholeheartedly with, the things which interest him, and in which he is deeply involved, and to learn particularly how to carry on.... (p.11). Later he states, “the teacher must begin where the student is,” but this can only be ascertained by knowing our students through informal assessments and discussions with students (p. 67). This leads to a curriculum that is clearly student centered in that everything revolves around the students. If assessments do not come out the way they expected then they should question whether the activity was appropriate and accomplished the given goal. The Tyler approach has the students’ needs as the essential question or building block for all other decisions. When creating objectives, Tyler would again suggest the students’ needs and the power of the teacher are central to all other decisions.

For Tyler (1949), the student is at the center of all educational decisions. Tyler (1949) explains, “it is a cardinal precept of the newer school of education that the beginning of instruction shall be made with the experience the learners already have; and that this experience and capacities that have been developed during the course provide a starting point for all further practices” (p. 74). This implies teachers should make fundamental decisions about how and what is taught in classrooms and the experiences students have in classrooms. Later he stresses the importance of beginning with the students suggesting that teachers should take on the gatekeeping role, that Thornton describes. Given the current standards driven educational environment, it is essential that teachers clearly understand how standardization is affecting their instructional choices and their role as a gatekeeper—especially if they are to negotiate the environment in which they teach. Thornton’s (2005) rationale is found throughout the work of Tyler (1949), as well as in the work of policy experts, who suggest that the way a teacher enacts curriculum policy affects the policy.

Policy Experts

According to Snyder et al. (1992), there are three main approaches to curriculum implementation; each impacts how the teacher enacts the requirements of the accountability movement (Snyder, et al., 1992). The *fidelity perspective* of curriculum assumes a policy will be enacted as close to the original intent as possible (Snyder, et al., 1992). The *mutual adaptation perspective* assumes curriculum is on going and participatory (Snyder et al., 1992), while the *curriculum enactment perspective* views the implementation of curriculum as a negotiation between teacher and student. The existence of each perspective has been supported through research and each method affects how the teacher uses the curriculum. However, the mutual adaptation approach posits “a certain degree of negotiation and flexibility on the part of both designers and practitioners,” which is a key part of Thornton’s perspective (Snyder, et al., 1992, p. 410). Unlike the fidelity approach that implies curriculum development occurs outside of school, the mutual adaptation approach sees curriculum as a small part of a more complex system of schools (Snyder, et al., 1992). This method also gives more power to the teacher. Both the fidelity and mutual adaptation approach are founded on the belief that the best curriculum is one that is “jointly created by students and teachers” (Snyder, et. al, 1992). The mutual adaptation approach allows the teacher to negotiate the implementation of curriculum, but to what extent is unclear. The importance of the mutual adaptation approach method is also in line with the work of both Tyler and Dewey. Although teachers have the power to negotiate curriculum, there are barriers that may prevent teachers from engaging in true curriculum creation. The mutual adaptation approach is also built on the assumption that teachers’ beliefs are a key factor of curriculum implementation. However, teacher agency is being compromised as Georgia ignores the benefits of the mutual adaptation approach and implements NCLB with a

high level of fidelity. However to what extent teacher agency is being affected is debatable. This relationship is a fundamental part of my research and Thornton's (2005) gatekeeping principle.

Teachers' personal beliefs about education ultimately determine how policy affects what actually happens in the classroom (Au, 2007). The teachers' personal beliefs about teaching and students serve as a filter for how curriculum looks and this filter is affected by a teachers' personality. (Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Huberman, 1988). These beliefs draw virtual lines in the sand, that impact curriculum enactment. Teachers make decisions about what they are, and are not willing, to change because of the policy. Some teachers are willing to "cram" content in exchange for doing activities they deem important (Diamond & Spillane, 2004). These decisions alter the interpretation of the policy in each classroom.

Gatekeeping is an example of the mutual adaptation approach, where the teacher ultimately negotiates the curriculum that is taught in classrooms. However, as state mandates enter the equation, gatekeeping and mutual adaptation are changing because school district administrators and other officials are using scare tactics and humiliation to manipulate teacher decision-making. The gatekeeping rationale is a necessary part of all aspects of this research study.

Assessment

High stakes tests are designed to measure outcomes of standardization meant to increase student performance but these tests' primary goal is bureaucratic, not educational (Madaus & Kellegan, 1992). The tests are a control mechanism of policy, designed to measure students' achievement, but they also imply that teachers cannot make decisions about what is important for students to know. Instead, state-mandated tests are needed to 'help' teachers determine what students know and should learn. The power of teachers is being taken away by these tests. The

tests are a system of monitoring designed to dictate curriculum and change the behaviors of teachers in their classrooms. However assessment can be used in a way that is consistent with Thornton's perspective of gatekeeping.

When considering how the tests are used, one must first consider the purpose of the assessment. Both high stakes supporters and classroom based assessment experts believe the goal of the assessment is to improve learning. Guskey (2007) suggests that classroom assessments serve as a "meaningful source of information for teachers" and that "assessments provide teachers with specific guidance, in their efforts to improve the quality of their teaching by helping to identify what they taught well and what needs work" (p. 18). Nichols & Berliner (2008) and contributors to *Ahead of the Curve* acknowledge that under the current high stakes system this analysis is almost impossible. Stiggins (2007) and Nichols & Berliner (2008) explain that the current test works as an assessment *of* learning not an assessment *for* learning, with the latter being a better use of testing.

White (2007), Gregg (2007), and Marzano (2007) make suggestions for how data can be used effectively, which is consistent with Nichols & Berliner's suggestion to have testing that is focused on assessment *for* learning. Marzano (2007) suggests students can use data to chart their progress, which will improve learning, because they have an invested interest in their success. Similarly, Gregg (2007) implies error analysis can be used to identify specific skills that need to be addressed. While others propose that "antecedents- adult actions that consistently lead to improved achievement... can be identified and implemented through the analysis of the appropriate data" (White, 2007, p. 207). Data analysis provides information to a teacher that is essential when making choices about curriculum, instruction, motivation, and effectiveness

(White, 2007). Using assessment data effectively has the power to improve the educational experiences of students and gives power to the teachers.

However, both Nichols & Berliner (2008) and Guskey (2007) suggest that high stakes testing, in its current form, denies teachers the ability to engage in this type of analysis because the data comes back after students leave and often is not detailed enough for the results to be useful. Crooks (1988) also suggests that while classroom based assessment is one of the most “potent forces influencing education” it receives less attention than other aspects of education, including high stakes testing (p. 467). Teachers want to use data but are frustrated with their lack of agency in the current system. While teachers have power over the data from formative assessments, this type of data is often ignored because of the dominance of high stakes tests.

Assessment for learning is crucial to gatekeeping because the power to make decisions about instruction is in the hands of the teacher rather than an external agency. Dewey (1916, 1929, 1933, 1938, 1991, 2008), Tyler (1949), and Snyder (1992) acknowledge that curriculum and by extension assessment are fundamental parts of the process of curriculum development and education. Assessment allows the teacher to determine what comes next whether it is remediation or moving forward. It is a fundamental part of the process (Stiggins, 2007).

Classroom assessment experts and high stakes testing advocates all call for ongoing assessment that improves learning. Teachers can “follow their assessments with instructional alternatives that present concepts in new ways and engage students in different and more appropriate learning experiences” (Guskey, 2007, p. 21). As teachers give feedback to students, students will learn more (Davis, 2007). When descriptive feedback is continually given and students realize their efforts are working, they learn more (Marzano, 2007). This power is the basis of gatekeeping.

In this study, I intend to explore the interaction of the gatekeeping role and instructional choices, built on Thornton's (2005) framework. This theoretical perspective is built on ideas found in Dewey (1916, 1922, 1929, 1938, 1991, 2008), Tyler (1949), Snyder (1992), White (2007), Reeves (2007), Stiggins (2007, etc. and Thornton's own contemporaries. Webeck et al. (2005) suggest that "classrooms are where teachers make choices at the intersection of boundaries, expectations, and challenges." Wiggins (1989) claims teachers play an essential role in negotiating educational policy and, ultimately, play a large role in the implementation and use of the standards. All of these authors acknowledge the power of the teacher and his/her beliefs when negotiating state mandates. However, it is unclear what role teachers play in the process and the way teachers negotiate the demands of the tests. This study hopes to determine actual connections. All of these ideas will be used as a framework to understand how teachers' instructional choices and their gatekeeping role are being affected by the state mandates.

Thornton as a Framework

Every aspect of this research study is guided by the principle that teachers should be the last step in the educational process and should be empowered to make necessary decisions about what is best for their students' learning. Gatekeeping is the primary lens that will be used throughout this study. Although Noddings (1979) argues that teachers are ill prepared for implementing curriculum, Thornton (2005) maintains that gatekeeping is "unavoidable but necessary if real change is ever to occur" (p. 5). Even if teachers are unprepared for this role it is a key part of education today. Thornton's (2005) theories provide the guidance for the methods, analysis, and research questions. Instructional choices are being affected by the current educational environment, however, if teachers are going to act as gatekeepers they must understand how state mandated tests are impacting instructional choices and their own

educational beliefs. Thornton's (2005) gatekeeping terminology may be foreign but the theoretical basis of gatekeeping is found in many aspects of educational research. In the next chapter, I will discuss some of the educational research on gatekeeping and other areas of literature that have informed this research study.

Chapter 2- Literature Review

In chapter one I established a theoretical framework built around the importance of the teacher as a gatekeeper. This framework suggests that teachers are the most important link in how curriculum is both interpreted and implemented in the classroom. However, when examining the educational landscape, researchers are faced with some contradictory results. The impact of state mandated tests on teachers' choices seem to depend on whom you ask. A Mississippi teacher reports, “my choice of instructional delivery and materials is completely dependent on preparation for this test” when discussing the impact of the United States history state exam (Vogler, 2006, p.1). Hess (2005), on the other hand, documents how teacher Joe Park increased his use of position papers because this is a skill needed to pass the state mandated test, but ultimately led to improved social studies instruction. Park suggests this form of writing is “at the heart of the social studies, because there is nothing more central to being a citizen than the ability to make and communicate decisions on challenging and important issues” (Hess, 2005, p. 143).

There is a need for Georgia social studies education researchers to enrich what we know about social studies and state mandates associated with NCLB in Georgia, because research studies in Georgia are far behind other high stakes states such as Virginia, Maryland, Indiana, Illinois, North Carolina, Florida, and Texas, which all have research studies that try to explain the impact of NCLB on the classroom (O' Connor et al., 2007). Georgia is a key part of the research field because of the way Georgia has decided to implement NCLB with the high stakes tied to the test--for example the Graduation Test requirements and Georgia's decision to

implement NCLB with a high level of fidelity. The high fidelity approach implies that school districts in Georgia are enforcing the NCLB legislation as close to the original intent of the law as possible. There is a clear need for more research in this field. There is a lot of data and research to choose from, so making broad statements about the impact NCLB on social studies is almost impossible.

When examining the impact of NCLB in the literature, it is necessary to explore several distinct research fields, as they all converge when exploring the relationship between the tests and what happens in classrooms. The first body of literature--the general impact of high stakes tests--is possibly the most varied. For instance, this literature addresses the reduction of class time, the tests' effect on instructional choices and the intended results of the tests. The second body of literature that needs to be explored is the assessment literature, as a key part of this study is the impact of high stakes assessment. This literature focuses on best practices of assessment in relationship to the state mandated tests. The third body of literature involved in this research centers on matters of policy. NCLB is a policy, and as such it is important to examine how policy-making and implementation works so the relationship between the two can be explored. The final body of literature focuses on teacher decision-making. As a gatekeeper this is essential—as this is, so to speak, where the rubber meets the road. However, teacher decision-making literature shows that a variety of elements influence teacher decision making, such as, the stakes tied to the tests, school environment, teachers' beliefs about tests, teachers' beliefs about curriculum, teachers' beliefs about the role of students in the classroom, etc. This review connects these distinct bodies of literature.

Impact of High Stakes Tests

The literature surrounding high stakes tests reveals conflicting data about the tests' impact. In the research, one finds staunch critics who make claims about the negative impacts of the standards movement and high stakes testing. One also finds converts who originally supported high stakes testing but have found such testing has yielded too many unintended and negative results (Ravitch, 2010). Others provide evidence that there is no clear connection between high stakes tests/standards and what occurs in the classroom. There is also a growing body of literature that highlights the positive effects of standardization. The relationship between high stakes tests and standards is neither simple nor clear and the literature reveals the complexities of the relationship. One of the purposes of this study to help explain the relationship between high stakes testing and teachers' decision making, using gatekeeping as a guiding principle.

Why High Stakes Tests

Arguments for implementing high stakes tests and standards include the need to determine what is important and the belief that students and teachers will work harder and be motivated to increase performance if they know what is expected (Amrien & Berliner, 2002). One of the claims of NCLB is that it will increase student achievement, which implies that education will improve for all students. The underlying assumption is the tests will shape curricular and instructional decisions and changes will then occur (Grant, 2000). According to Savage (2003), proponents believe that high stakes testing should "improve education because it advances the idea of high standards and accountability" (p. 202).

The second reason people call for standardization is the belief that standardized tests can "reliably and validly measure student achievement" (Heuber & Hauser, 1999). In turn, this will

then allow teachers to use the results to help individual students improve student learning, and design a better educational system for all students (Amrien & Berliner, 2002). In effect, these tests will improve the education of students, especially marginalized students because teachers will be driven to improve the education for these students for fear of punishment or reprimand (Savage, 2003).

Around the world, educational and political systems have relied on high stakes testing to make substantial decisions. For example the Chinese used them to determine job placements; Europeans in the early 1900s used them to determine students who were most likely to succeed in school; and Horace Mann called for ‘standardized’ testing in American schools as early as 1845 (Madaus and Kellegan, 1992). Testing has been around for years so it is no surprise that after *Sputnik* and the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (1983) that Americans turned back to testing to ensure students were learning so that they could successfully compete in the world and more importantly so they could beat the Russians. However when schools failed to meet the challenge, a variety of reform reports, such as *A Nation at Risk* (1983), demanding more standardization were released in the 1980s. Events such as these caused a shift in curriculum policy. Not only were schools failing and teachers unable to meet the needs of the students, but also federal/state governments had a role in the implementation of the new educational programs through standards and state mandated assessments. This same shift has taken place in the NCLB era. The problem with this shift is it seems to be forcing teachers to change their educational practices in attempts to conform to the standards and test driven environment (Ravitch, 2010). So, teachers are often replacing what they know is best for their students to what is on the test, in an attempt to maintain credibility in a world governed by THE test (Ravitch, 2010, Nichols and Berliner, 2008, Madaus et al, 2009).

A prime example of this situation is the assumption that high stakes tests are designed to measure success. This idea has inherent problems. The tests are designed to test only one domain of knowledge, which is often a mystery to the teachers (Madaus, et al, 2007). This situation makes it very difficult for teachers to prepare students. The standards and tests make assumptions about what knowledge is of most worth and ensures that certain material is addressed while leaving other ideals out—thus, devaluing the role of the teacher in the process. When one test is used to make critical decisions, like graduation and school ratings, some students and teachers suffer adverse results (Madaus, et al., 2007). When test results are reported in newspapers, the results represent what is “important” about education, which is the test. This reduces schooling to a series of facts that appear on a test, and teachers, to transmitters of knowledge. This undermines the role of the teacher, forcing them to participate in defensive teaching, and promotes an image of them as unskilled workers (Madaus & Kellegan, 1992).

Effects on Instructional Practices

There are several questions surrounding the impact of NCLB on instructional practices in social studies. Are instructional practices changing? It seems to depend on whom you ask. One teacher recounts how much time she spent on Attila the Hun, explaining that, “we only spent a day or two on it, but I can't spend the time to explore that because, I really...I know it's not on the exam and I can't waste the time” (Grant et al., 2002). Grant's (2003) study of eleven elementary, middle, and high school teachers in New York reveals that how much time is spent on test preparation depends on the teacher, with some choosing explicit preparation and others choosing less overt tactics. Blair, one teacher in Grant's (2003) study, uses a narrative approach to teaching that is relatively aligned with the test, so it is possible that his tactics “implicitly mirrors the test” (Grant, 2003, p. 116). Strait, another teacher in Grant's (2003) study, instead

takes time at the end of each unit to review for the test (Grant, 2003). In high stakes states like Georgia, where promotion and retention are tied to tests, there seems to be an obvious increase in test preparation time. In a nation wide survey 44% of the teachers in high stakes states reported spending “more than 30 class hours per year preparing students for state tests (e.g., teaching test taking skills)” (Abrams et al., 2003, p.23). It is very difficult to determine how much time is spent on test preparation, given the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) govern what is taught and are the basis of the test. However, there does seem to be some evidence that changes are occurring, given the increase in the number of test preparation workbooks and programs that are currently available.

Some teachers have reported using fewer student-centered activities because these activities took time away from covering the standards and test preparation (Cuban, 2009). In his own observations of three school districts in Arlington, VA, Oakwood, CA, and Denver, CO, Cuban saw teachers considering the test when making decisions about “textbooks, worksheets, discussions, projects, ” (p. 29), in response to “policy demands of standards based reforms, increased testing, and accountability measures” (p.21). In a Mississippi study of 107 teachers across 55 school districts, teachers were more likely to use teacher-centered methods because this method is more useful in lower level activities (Vogler, 2006). Similarly, van Hover's (2006) study of seven beginning history teachers in three different high schools in Virginia reveals that teacher driven practices dominate instructional practices in the accountability era. This type of method emphasizes a transmission approach and often eliminates the role of the students.

Thornton (2001) believes that NCLB “reinforces the tendency for social studies courses to ignore student interests” (p.25). He further argues that an important aspect of teaching social studies is that it is “individualized” and students are given choices (Thornton, 2001, p. 25).

Thornton (2001) argues “the needs, interests, and aptitudes of students ought to be part of the aims talk if we are serious about ‘leaving no child behind’” (p. 51). In a six-month case study of standardized tests in Michigan, Segall (2003) explains that high stakes tests caused a "sense of frustration, confusion, alienation, and anger" that encouraged teachers to teach in a way that was contrary to personal beliefs. All of these ideas suggest that the current system is damaging the role of the teachers. This is perhaps one of the reasons why Thornton (2001) calls for teachers to be gatekeepers of curriculum. This principle is essential as test preparation becomes the norm and the power of the teacher over curriculum is brought into question.

Grant (2003) claims one of the greatest implications of NCLB is on the content taught. The Center for Educational Policy (2007) found that many teachers reported narrowing curriculum and eliminating concepts not on the test. Popham (2001) suggests in the classes that have standards attached, the teachers tend to rely more on skill and drill methods and teachers tended to teach to the test. This method often reduces history to “a list of people, places, and dates rather than an opportunity for students to experience history and use it as a bridge to connect all academic areas,” which can be assessed using the multiple choice format (Vogler, 2006, p. 300). However more important than the things that are limited in social studies are those that are missing. A teacher, Blair, explains that he never teaches militarism when discussing the Civil War because it never appears on the Regents' exam (Grant, 2003). This appears like a minor infraction. However, what else is being left out because of these tests? Blair recounts another topic that is not on the test is the Constitutional period (Grant, 2003). While Blair continues to teach this subject, what about other teachers (Grant, 2003)? New teachers are often overwhelmed by the amount of content they need to teach and may not have the content background to realize the importance of teaching material that is not on the test. What if Hitler

was not in the standards? Does this mean teachers should not teach about him? What kind of service are teachers doing to our kids when we limit and narrow the curriculum? When teaching the Holocaust, can it be reduced to a definition and the number of people that died? While it can be, is this responsible? Success in social studies is being measured by coverage rather than depth, which is problematic because it promotes superficial knowledge. This coverage pressure is a barrier to promoting student thinking (Onosko, 1991).

The state mandated tests seem to emphasize coverage rather than understanding (Vogler, 2006; Ravitch, 2010, Popham, 2001; Madaus, et al, 2007). The number of standards a social studies teacher is expected to teach is astronomical. Imagine teaching world history from the beginning of time to current day in 18 weeks. Teachers are overwhelmed by the content often pushing them to make decisions that they would otherwise not make. van Hover & Yeager's (2004) study of beginning history teachers reveals that pace is one of their biggest challenges. "Teachers noted that...time crunch prevented them from covering topics in depth. Rapid coverage of topics and a focus on breadth of content comprised a central component of their teaching lives" (van Hover, et al., 2006). This captures the culture of teaching in the high stakes states where significant power is given to how well students do on an exam. Many first year history teachers discuss their fears of losing their jobs if they do not cover the curriculum, reducing social studies instruction to copying outlines, worksheets, and lectures.

With standards in place, the pressure to cover material is very real. Complicating the situation is the concept of the Protestant work ethic, which is prevalent in American thought. Such work ethic suggests that when a person does a job they are to do it well. Teachers often feel compelled to teach everything in the standards even if it means memorizing random facts, because of their beliefs in Protestant work ethic (Diamond & Spillane, 2004, Sacks, 1999).

Teachers are often torn between what they feel is important and what the test makers feel is important, making teaching an even more stressful job (Grant, 2003). This is at the heart of gatekeeping, the factors that impact teachers' choices. The problem with the current situation is teachers are making decisions that are not based on what is in the best interest of the child but instead on some psychological manipulation, where teachers are convinced that their success and/or failure is tied to the test. This shame, blame, and humiliation over test scores leads teachers to feel they must compromise beliefs for the sake of the test.

While teacher well-being is important in the equation, the pressures to cover material before a state mandated tests are “detrimental to the promotion of higher order thinking” (Onosko, 1991, p. 248). The speed of coverage also limits students' ability to engage in critical thinking, which is often used as a synonym for higher order thinking. Parker (1989) suggests that critical thinking or reasoning requires students to “shift from one logic to another and see the problem in an altogether new light” (Parker, 1989, p.9). This is almost impossible when teachers have 90 days to discuss all of U.S. History. There is little time for students to stop and truly engage in the material. Students are unable to participate in historical inquiry, where students immerse themselves in history and historical documents so that they can create their meaning own meaning and interpretations of history (Wineburg, 1991). Vansledright et al., (2006), after teaching students how to do history, or the work of a historian, he worried about how the students would do on the test. Serious questions are raised about doing historical inquiry in states where stakes are extremely high. Students and teachers do not have time to engage in reflective practices but are instead pushed forward. This is especially true in states that have all multiple choice tests because teachers are often teaching to the test, which emphasizes recall of historical facts. As a result “material that involved higher order thinking and problem solving often falls by

the wayside” (Sternberg, 1985, p. 156). The drive to cover material reinforces transmission and in turn curbs higher order thinking in social studies classrooms. If this is occurring, are teachers still gatekeepers or is their role compromised?

Hierarchy-Reduction-Elimination

Given math, language arts, and science are the only subjects mentioned in the NCLB legislation, a hierarchy of content is being created where non-tested items are at the bottom (Vogler, 2003). When social studies is not tested, it is often 'crowded out' of the curriculum to make room for the tested subjects (Cimbricz, 2002; O'Connor, 2007; Popham, 2001). If social studies is tested, it does maintain a higher role. However, it still may not be as important as language arts and math (Vogler, 2006). For example, in Georgia, social studies is a tested subject and required for graduation, but the results do not have a direct bearing on AYP. So where does this leave social studies? One answer to this question seems to depend on the individual school's leadership. Often principals make final decisions on how subjects are prioritized, choosing to push out social studies in exchange for other subjects (Jones et al, 1999). A second answer seems to be related to the stakes tied to the tests.

In states where the stakes are high in language arts, math, and science, there is a significant decrease in non-tested items, while states with relatively low stakes do not face these decreases (Madaus, et, al, 2003). In North Carolina, after the first year of high stakes testing in math and language arts, teachers were asked to spend more time in math, reading, and writing even if it meant spending less time in social studies (Jones, et al., 1999). A *Center on Educational Policy* (2008) report reveals that from 2001-2002, social studies instructional time was reduced by 32% or by 76 minutes per week. Another *Center on Educational Policy* report (2007) suggests that 44% of the districts studied reported cutting time from other subjects to

accommodate an increase in time for English Language Arts and Math. VanFossen (2005) in his Indiana study of 592 K- 5 teachers suggests only 12 minutes per week were spent teaching social studies. According to a 2006 study, elementary school teachers spent 75% of their time teaching math and reading, “leaving inadequate instructional time for other subjects” (Cawelti, 2006, p. 64).

In North Carolina, primary teachers (K-2) reported spending only 15 to 30 minutes in social studies per week (Rock et al., 2006). The Center for Educational Policy (2007) reports that in middle schools across the country less time is spent in social studies than any other subject per week. Washington, North Carolina, South Carolina, Illinois, Indiana, and Maryland all have reported a significant decrease in the time spent in social studies instruction (Stecher & Chun, 2001; Rock et al., 2006, VanFossen, 2005; von Zantrow & Janc, 2004; Lemming et al., 2006). The data suggests that social studies is being limited but there are still opportunities to teach social studies. Teachers and schools still have the power to make social studies important and what the numbers do not reveal is the quality of the social studies instruction that may be occurring in these few precious minutes. However the role of assessment in this process cannot be ignored.

The Role of Assessment

NCLB as a policy is built on evaluation and assessment. However as the literature reveals these words can be ambiguous and cause possible problems when trying to interpret the relationship between testing and teacher practices. Words like 'assessment,' seem rather simple to define, but when looking at the way it is used in everyday language and professional literature, it can mean a variety of things (Madaus & Kellegan, 1992). Classroom teachers often see assessment as anything they do in the classroom that evaluates the individual from informal

questioning to quizzes, tests, and essays. Politicians see assessments as policy tools designed to evaluate schools and teachers. So when discussing assessment, it is important to understand what assessment and evaluation are before discussing the relationship between the differing perspectives, as these terms are often used interchangeably. Assessment is concerned with the “appraisal of an individual”, where evaluation is often the “appraisal of a program” (Madaus and Kellegan, 1992, p.120). For the purpose of this study, assessment is defined as any activity whose perceived purpose is to “show what a person knows or can do” (Madaus and Kellegan, 1992). Both politicians and teachers fervently believe that whatever the type of assessment, its purpose is to tell them something about the individual or group. However, how to get these results and what to do with them is difficult for those outside education and policy to ascertain.

Assessment types range from high stakes to low stakes, informal to formal, formative to summative, and classroom based to standardized, not to mention the form these tests may take from multiple choice, essay, short answer, etc. These variations make discussing assessment a sometimes controversial subject because there is an expert for each form who sings the benefits and/or problems of each, often setting up a dichotomy. Nevertheless, all of these different goals, types, and formats have a long history in society and, especially, schools. According to Madaus & Kellegan (1992), “tests and assessments have been used as devices for stimulating efforts to learn and for administrative purpose in education for a considerably long time” (p.121). Tests and assessment are a fundamental part of schools, but in the last few years, high stakes mania has taken hold of the media and the schools. In Bibb County, Georgia, the *Macon Telegram* reported that 70 of 180 school days were spent on standardized testing (Hubbard, 2006). Given this recent trend, it is not surprising that literature is appearing that explores the uses of assessment.

Students and the general public assume that teachers have a lot of power over testing, but based on the literature, I argue that classroom based assessments are being adversely affected by the high stakes tests. Teachers seem to be designing their classroom-based assessments to mirror the state mandated test in format and type (Madaus, et al., 2003). Unfortunately what this means is in states that have multiple-choice state mandated tests, teachers are giving more multiple-choice classroom-based assessments. Multiple-choice tests can only measure certain material, not topics that require analysis or evaluation (Van Blerkom, 2008; Popham, 2008). In states like New York, teachers are including more document-based questions (DBQs) because this is the same type of question that appears on the tests (Gerwin, 2004). Using more primary sources in social studies should be a very good thing, but some researchers argue that the way the primary sources are being used is more of a skill and drill method (Gerwin, 2004). For example in writing a DBQ, emphasis is placed on having a five sentence introduction with a set number of references per paragraph--instead of making a connection with historical writing and historical inquiry. Grant (2003) recounts the comments of a teacher, Paula, who suggests that she would use documents differently if it were not for the test. While the increase in the use of primary sources is important, I am unsure if this use of primary sources is any different than any other skill and drill method of test preparation.

Data Use

According to Nichols & Berliner (2008), data from high stakes tests is likely to be corrupt because of the stakes tied to the data. However, classroom based assessment experts claim data gathered from assessments is an essential tool in improving education and is required to move past the bell curve psychology that dominates schools (Reeves et al, 2007). For both assessment experts and high stakes testing critics, the problem seems to be the policymakers' beliefs that

“large-scale assessments will help focus educators' attention and guarantee success, especially if consequences are attached to the assessment results” (Guskey, 2007).

Many assessment experts suggest that testing should be focused on assessment *for* learning, not a summative assessment that delivers a final verdict on a student's success or failure (White, 2007, Gregg, 2007, Marzano, 2007 Nichols & Berliner, 2008). Students who chart their progress from formative assessments often show improved results (Marzano, 2007). When data is used consistently, both students and teachers can employ error analysis to identify content or skills that need to be addressed (Gregg, 2007, White, 2007). Data analysis provides information to a teacher that is essential when making choices about curriculum, instruction, motivation, and effectiveness (White, 2007). Using assessment data effectively has the power to improve the educational experiences of students, consistent with the gatekeeping philosophy. However, both Nichols & Berliner (2008) and Guskey (2007) suggest that high stakes testing, in its current form, denies teachers the ability to engage in this type of analysis because the data comes back after students leave and often is not detailed enough for the results to be useful. Teachers want to use data but are frustrated with their lack of agency in the current system. While teachers have power over the data from formative assessments, this type of data is often ignored because of the dominance of high stakes tests. This puts the teachers' gatekeeping role in jeopardy. This conflict is a primary reason for this study. The need to understand the relationship between high stakes tests and teachers' instructional choices is essential in today's world.

When any type of data is collected, it is possible that it may be inaccurate and misconstrued. When this occurs, teachers cannot use the data to improve learning. Stiggins (2007) suggests, “inaccurate data leads to counterproductive instructional decisions and thus it is harmful to students” (p. 59). Schools are changing student results and misconstruing drop out

rates, all in an attempt to comply with NCLB--thus, creating more inaccurate data (Nichols & Berliner 2008). This misrepresentation of data is dangerous. When scores are inaccurate, teachers cannot use the data properly, placing the gatekeeping role in jeopardy, which is a “mis-educative” practice (Dewey, 1938).

The goal of assessment, according to both high stakes supporters and classroom based assessment experts, is to improve learning. Guskey (2007) suggests that classroom assessments serve as a “meaningful source of information for teachers” and that “assessments provide teachers with specific guidance, in their efforts to improve the quality of their teaching by helping to identify what they taught well and what needs work“(p. 18). This analysis is impossible under the constraints of high stakes testing. Stiggins (2007) and Nichols & Berliner (2008) explain that the current test works as an assessment *of* learning not an assessment *for* learning, with the latter being a better use of testing. Therefore, Nichols & Berliner (2008) argue that the tests are undermining education because the purpose of the test is not aligned with their usage. Under the current system, tests are used to rank schools and assess performance of teachers, not students. According to the American Educational Research Association (AERA)(2009), tests valid for one purpose may not be valid for another. It is questionable whether the high stakes tests can really be used to assess schools, students, teachers, administrators, etc. Nichols & Berliner (2008) and Madaus et. al (2009) both argue that one of the major problems with high stakes testing is their use. I posit that this is admission that the current use of high stakes tests is invalid.

If these tests are not valid, can they reliably measure what students learned, what teachers teach, or the success of a school? Given that high stakes tests measure only a small portion of what is taught, it is difficult to determine if the tests are reliable. The state standards, in theory,

should guide instruction and increase reliability of high stakes testing and guarantee content reliability. However, Marzano (2007) suggests that state standards are a major impediment to the reliability of high stakes testing. Most teachers would agree the expected content coverage is far too great for the time teachers have with students. Even when teachers teach to the standards, there is evidence suggesting tests are not aligned to the standards (AFT, 2006). Several anecdotal reports imply that students perceive the tests as so important that they have to stop learning to prepare for the test (Foster, 2006). There are even “experts” suggesting that schools teach only 2/3 of the school year and use the rest to prepare for the test (Milark, 2002). This further complicates the reliability of tests, bringing into question whether any high stakes tests can be reliable. The intent of the high stakes tests is to provide evidence to taxpayers that NCLB is working. However given the controversy over reliability, the degree to which the high stakes tests are providing such evidence is in question.

The fanatical focus on test results is disrupting schools’ ability to promote learning. Teachers can “follow their assessments with instructional alternatives that present concepts in new ways and engage students in different and more appropriate learning experiences” (Guskey, 2007, p. 21). However, as Nichols and Berliner (2008) suggest, high stakes tests are doing the opposite by diminishing the role of the teacher, and the student, in the process and, in effect, undermining schools, and teachers’ gatekeeping role.. These practices are not good for students or teachers. Instead the literature suggests that teachers’ power is being limited-- which seems contrary to good teaching practice. When assessment is used correctly in correlation with feedback and mastery learning, improvements in education do occur.

According to Anderson et al. (1992), when mastery learning is implemented, students' academic achievement improves, as well as their self-confidence. The key to mastery

learning is the student's ability to understand and use the feedback that teachers give. When “specific, descriptive feedback is increased students learn more” (Davies, 2007, p.33). When descriptive feedback is continually given and students realize their efforts are working, they learn more (Marzano, 2007). However, in the case of high stakes tests, “they offer no immediately useful instructional information” (Nichols & Berliner, 2008). Teachers cannot give feedback to students because of the timing of the testing cycle and because of the often-cryptic way data is represented from the state. It is unclear if the purpose of NCLB and its tests is being realized. These tests are becoming a way to control teachers’ actions in the classroom (MacLure, 2005). The high stakes tests are being sold as necessary to 'help' teachers determine what students know and should learn (St. Pierre, 2006). The power of teachers is being taken away by these tests. The tests are a system of monitoring and change designed to dictate curriculum and change the behaviors of teachers in their classrooms (MacLure, 2005, St. Pierre, 2006).

One of the major claims of high stakes testing advocates is that no child will be left behind, that each student will receive the same quality of education regardless of socio-economic status; however, research suggests the opposite is occurring. “The long-term effects of standardization are even more damaging; over the long term, standardization creates inequities,” as more minorities are dropping out of school, therefore “widening the gap between the quality of education for poor and minority youth and that of more privileged students” (McNeil, 2000, p. 3, Gratz, 2000). Barbour, et al, (2007) suggests standardization may lead to a version of history that ignores people of color or women and instead represents a “meta-narrative of the Tightness of white expansion”(p. 4). If marginalized students are receiving a less quality education, how can high stakes tests improve educational opportunities? The biggest problem with state mandated tests are they take the control of assessment away from teachers. When teachers and

districts attempt to control the type and method of state mandated tests, like in Nebraska, the federal government declares them invalid, reducing the role of the teacher (Commission for NCLB, 2007). The policy of NCLB is changing the role of the teacher and could be detrimental to students so it is important to understand the development of educational policy.

Educational Policy

The literature surrounding the policy making process varies because policy is made at the local, state, and national level and by a variety of different leaders at these various levels. At each level of Anderson's (2003) national policy-making process, teachers have an essential role in how both policy and curriculum is developed and implemented. At the agenda setting stage, teachers tend to focus on policy-making at the local and school level in reaction to the federal policy. Teachers are also concerned with how these policies will impact the curriculum they will teach. This is perhaps the most difficult stage for teachers as they often desire more power in setting the agenda after its implementation, but are often unwilling or unprepared to accept the challenge. At the formulation stage, the teachers' role is more localized. At the adoption, implementation, and evaluation stage, teachers play the most important role. The adoption stage is also a difficult part of the process for teachers because teachers are struggling with the conflicts between policymakers, the proposed changes to curriculum, and the impact these changes have on individual classrooms. Thornton (1991) and Wiggins (1989) claim teachers play an essential role in negotiating educational policy and are gatekeepers of curriculum, therefore the implementation stage is the most important interaction between policy and curriculum because this is where the most negotiation occurs. This negotiation occurs between multiple stakeholders and personal agendas that tend to impact the fidelity of implementation. At the

evaluation stage, teachers' role is superficial because they have little power over the assessment tool.

The problem with curriculum policy is that it is often created without the input of the people who will be implementing it in the classroom. Most policies are a reaction to political, cultural or economic demands, much like the reaction to the publication of *The Nation at Risk*. This report alleged that American students were failing to compete in the growing world market because "our schools failed to measure up to those nations on international comparisons of student achievement," which led to early calls for standardized testing in schools (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p.8).

As policy is formulated, different interest groups vie for a role in the creation of standards. Textbook companies, national discipline centered professional organizations, teachers, state departments of education, and the Secretary of Education all believe they know what is best for schools and what the standards should be. However, standard setting is not benign but, instead, a political organism that reflects prevailing attitudes and social norms of the developers. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) demands more mathematics education, suggesting that it is THE solution to the problem with education. Professional organizations are attempting to secure a place for their content area. Debates among professional associations begin to emerge regarding whether standards should be content and outcomes driven or include pedagogy (Massell, 1994).

Textbook companies want to play a role in standards development to ensure they can sell a plethora of materials to help people meet the needs of the new standards. These companies are also concerned with their bottom line. Common standards across states help national textbook companies make more money. Strongly tied to the textbook companies are the test makers who

share the same interests as the textbook companies. They are looking for some commonality in the standards to make their jobs easier.

The Department of Education of each state wishes to specify their own curriculum guidelines and materials (Massell, 1994). Every group has their own agenda for the standards. These agendas wish to provide THE answer to what knowledge is important and this is very dangerous territory. For example, in social studies the decision to include (or not include) the Tuskegee Airmen or African Americans in WWII reflects a value or moral statement about who and what is important. Besides determining what knowledge should be in the standards, these organizations also want to be the flagship, the people who solve the educational problem before the rest. An outcome of this competition between the differing personal agendas, often results in disparate formulations—with differing layers of teacher involvement of the standard setting process.

At the adoption stage of policy, NCLB is embedded with “symbolic language” (Anderson, 2003 p. 110). The name of this policy is a formidable adversary. What teacher or concerned citizen wants to leave any child behind? This language often prevents alternative solutions or revisions to be made, for fear that the developer will be deemed as one of those people who is condemning education for all students. With NCLB comes Scientifically Based Research (SBR), which calls for more research studies in education that utilize random sampling--thus, reducing education to a warehouse of statistical data generated by a narrowly defined definition of science that includes “testing hypotheses and using experimental and quasi experimental designs only, and preferring random assignment” (Eisenhart and Towne, 2003, 34). Perhaps few would not welcome better educational research, however what constitutes good research seems to be dictated by NCLB. The wording of NCLB is purposeful. It creates an

almost impenetrable shield around the policy. It makes teachers, many of whom are at odds with the adoption of standards and their tests, enemies of education and students. No teacher wants to be the person who wants to leave children behind nor the one who does not want to improve research in education.

However at the implementation stage, Diamond (2004) suggests with his paper title that this is the stage “where the rubber meets the road,” therefore, implementation is the most critical for teachers. The implementation of high stakes tests and standardization varies greatly depending on the location, school, and classroom because implementation is dependent upon the people involved and how the policy is perceived (Elmore & Sykes, 1992). The policymakers often do not understand what actually occurs in classrooms, leading to more variations in implementation (Smith et. al, 1994). Teachers' personal views also affect how the curriculum is experienced.

Curriculum Implementation Methods- Fidelity, Mutual Adaptation, and Curriculum Enactment

The fidelity approach is the approach policy makers hope teachers will use. This approach assumes teachers will do what is necessary to follow the prescribed curriculum with as little variation as possible (Snyder, et al. 1992). The goal in a fidelity approach is to quantify all aspects of education so that a checklist can be developed to ensure success. However, as researchers begin to explore the impact of testing on classrooms, they are finding this research is very difficult because of the situational nature of school (Cornbleth, 2001, Grant, 2008). However, teachers still often use the fidelity approach. Teachers often feel compelled to use the fidelity approach because of fear and humiliation: fear that they will be identified as a teacher whose students fail the test, fear that they will suffer consequences because students do not

achieve high enough scores, and fear of personal failure as a teacher (Sacks, 1999; Nichols & Berliner, 2008; Madaus and Kellegan, 1998). All these issues affect a teacher's decision to use the fidelity approach. Yes, teachers have the power to decide but often they are paralyzed by fear. The major issue with this approach is to what extent the policy is followed. Of 12 studies conducted on teachers using the fidelity approach, all differed in the degree of implementation (Snyder, et al., 1992). This variation leads many teachers to adopt the mutual adaptation approach instead.

The mutual adaptation approach “implies a certain degree of negotiation and flexibility on the part of both designers and practitioners” (Snyder, et al., 1992, p. 410). This method gives more power to the teacher. The mutual adaptation approach allows the teacher to negotiate the implementation of the process, but to what extent is unclear, especially given the fear factor associated with high stakes tests. Unlike the fidelity approach, which implies curriculum development occurs outside of school, the mutual adaptation approach sees curriculum as a small part of a more complex system of schools (Snyder, et al., 1992). This approach gives teachers more power to negotiate curriculum, but there are barriers that may prevent meaningful changes. These barriers lead many teachers to favor the curriculum enactment approach

The curriculum enactment approach places the teacher at the center of policy implementation, thus validating the ideas of Thornton (Snyder, 1992). This approach suggests “curriculum knowledge is a personal construct” created by both teachers and students (p. 418). Under this approach the teachers create the curriculum. These teachers’ desire to create engaging and meaningful educational experiences for their students, drives the curriculum, like the child driven curriculum promoted by Dewey(1916, 1922, 1929, 1938, 1991, 2008) and Tyler

(1949). However, this approach is complicated by the factors that influence the decisions teachers make in classrooms.

Teacher Decision Making

Cuban (2009) and Grant (2003) suggest there is no easy answer to how teachers negotiate the decisions in their classrooms. Barton (2005) suggests teachers should be reflective in their practices. He argues that, if this occurs, teachers will use the standards to help students by building on what they know (Barton, 2005). Classrooms are where essential decisions are made about what to teach and the tests (Webeck et al.2005; Segall, 2003). However, White (1888) as early as 1880 in his study of promotion and examination in graded schools said “few teachers can resist the influence of the test and teach according to their better judgment... They shut their eyes to needs of the pupil and put their strength into what will 'count' on the examination” (p. 518). All of these authors acknowledge the power of the teacher and their beliefs when negotiating NCLB. However, this further complicates the research, given there is no clear connection between beliefs and certain actions and/or reactions, as each teacher arbitrates the demands of NCLB differently.

When considering any policy--whether it is an official document from the state, like NCLB or, a small school policy--teachers' personal beliefs ultimately determine to what extent the policy affects what actually happens in the classroom. Segall (2003) theorizes that the test is not the only factor that influences "how teachers' perceptions of their roles in the context of standardized testing are constructed, ” but other factors such as the rhetoric surrounding the tests(p. 318). These beliefs draw virtual lines in the sand that impact curriculum enactment. Huberman (1988) found that the personality of the teacher influences how they enact curriculum. The teachers' personal beliefs about teaching and students serve as a filter for how curriculum

looks in the classroom (Diamond & Spillane, 2004). However research indicates that the tests are influencing the filter that teachers are using to make these fundamental decisions (Au, 2007 Segall, 2008, White, 2007).

Teachers make decisions about what they are (and are not willing) to change because of the policy. Some teachers are willing to “cram” content in exchange for doing activities they deem important (Diamond & Spillane, 2004). Teachers’ ideas about pedagogy seem to govern the extent to which they implement policy (Au, 2007). However, in the majority of the 49 qualitative studies Au (2007) reviewed, the high stakes tests did affect the pedagogy and content of teachers. So, while teachers' beliefs do impact the implementation, the age of standardization has altered the way teachers interact with curriculum. According to Madaus, et al, (2007), “high stakes tests ... reshape student-teacher relationships and define what an educated person should know, understand, and be able to do, and what should be taught and learned” (p. 100). So, the power of the teacher has changed with the implementation of high stakes tests.

The other factor that influences teachers' beliefs is the school in which they work. According to Fullan (2007), teachers' peers and school environment affect how willing, or unwilling, they are to incorporate changes dictated by the policy of standardization. In schools where the high stakes tests drive the school, teachers seem to make more change to meet the demands of the school leadership (Diamond & Spillane, 2004). The changes these teachers make are often based on pressures from peers and the leadership staff. The changes may not occur if the same teachers were in different situations. School climate affects how teachers implement policy. Schools with a higher portion of change-oriented teachers interpret policy differently than those in schools where change is looked down upon (Fullan, 2007). Cornbleth (2001) suggests that within schools there are constraints and/or restraints that create situations in schools that are

specific to certain environments. As such, it makes sense that the tests alter school environments. The environment strongly impacts teachers' decision-making. However, individual teachers can still have power over curriculum. Personal beliefs and ideas strongly impact the extent curriculum is implemented. Teachers are finding ways to manipulate the system. They are finding ways to meet the needs of the policy without losing their professional integrity. Fullan (2007) suggests "teachers in learning enriched schools were less likely to conform to new state or district policies that they judged ill-conceived" (p. 141). When teachers are supported they are better able to balance personal beliefs and policy implementation in a positive way. Teachers are the last line of defense in curriculum implementation but they are not free of barriers that affect their decision-making.

Thornton (1991) and Wiggins (1989) both argue that teachers play a fundamental role in negotiating what is taught in the classroom. As a result it is not surprising that there are examples of how teachers balance their personal beliefs and the standards. Teachers are able to build on Barton's (2005) ideas of reflective practices and use the standards to help students by building on what they know.

However, with all the research it is still unclear how high stakes testing impacts teacher decision-making in social studies. Proponents of high stakes testing argue the tests will improve learning because teachers will work harder and be motivated to increase performance if they know what is expected (Amrien and Berliner, 2002). Vogler (2006) suggests that 90% of respondents in his study believe the state test influences instructional practices. However the degree to which change is really occurring seems questionable (Cimbricz, 2002; Grant 2001). Grant (2001) considers the test an 'uncertain lever,' suggesting that the impact of high stakes tests on classrooms is unclear. Some argue that the influence of the test is overblown (Firestone, et al,

1998), others suggest there is a connection but the influence is weak (Corbett & Wilson, 1991)-- and others state that the test has a major impact on instruction (Madaus, 1988). According to Kreitzer and Madaus (1995), accountability tests can cause teachers to reduce creativity and tailor instruction to the test. High stakes testing has created a “form of Pavlovian conditioning; rewards and sanctions direct teacher and student behavior” (Madaus, et al., 2009). So what is the truth? It appears that there is research that supports all three claims in social studies. The following examples provide snippets of how teachers have been able to improve their practices because of the high stakes tests.

Positive Examples of Change

Libresco (2005) explains how one teacher began to include more document-based activities because the New York State had a DBQ (Document Based Question) section. The teacher in Libresco's (2005) study states that using more documents allowed the students to engage in “doing the stuff of historians” (p. 39). The teachers, in this study, report the tests improved the critical thinking of their students. Larson (2005) suggests that standardization is leading teachers to engage in what Newmann calls “authentic intellectual work”, where critical/higher order thinking are being emphasized (Newman & Wehlage, 1993). Larson (2005) suggests that teachers can increase critical thinking activities because they know the content that they have to teach. Van Hover & Heinecke (2005) suggest that one way to negotiate the tests is to reduce the time spent on historical inquiry instead of eliminating it. This allows teachers to maintain their professional integrity and beliefs but still conform to the state test. Other reports suggest standardization has increased collaboration, therefore, improving teachers' lessons (Yendol-Hoppey, et al., 2005). Many researchers are suggesting that standardization can help teachers. These case studies show how the conditions of NCLB have had a positive impact on

classrooms. In these cases teachers are acting as gatekeepers, using the high stakes tests but making decisions that benefit students and maintaining their integrity.

Uncertain Examples of Change

In Virginia alone, it is possible to find examples of both teachers who found ways to creatively negotiate the demands of state mandated tests and teachers whose instruction has become constrained and/or limited by the demands of high stakes testing (van Hover et al., 2006). There seems to be a 'mixed bag of claims' of how tests affect instruction (van Hover et al., 2006). Cuban (2009) finds that results vary across states, depending on the stakes tied to the state mandated tests, which is consistent with Madaus et al.'s (2003) research. Grant (2009) suggests “tests do matter to teachers but how they matter is uncertain” (p. 138). This makes studying the impact of high stakes testing extremely difficult and controversial. The uncertainty in the examples is often difficult to determine. Research shows that stakes have a significant impact on how the tests are viewed. However, there are other reasons that contribute to the diversity in the literature. The school level seems to also have some bearing. High schools seem to face more significant instructional changes than elementary and middle schools because of the stakes tied to tests for both teachers and students (Grant, 2000). There is an uncertainty that exists in the research because the majority of the data is anecdotal and situational. Grant's (2003) own case studies yield conflicting results with Blair, a teacher, arguing that he made no significant changes to his practices and Strait who struggled to meet the demands of the tests. The extent of change is also unclear. Some argue that the changes are insignificant because the curriculum is the same-- the only thing that is different is the amount of time spent on different units, while other argue that the changes have a negative impact on instruction (Grant, et al., 2002). To what extent this is

occurring in Georgia schools is still in question. The goal of this study is to determine what impact these tests are having in one county in Georgia.

Negative examples of change

High stakes testing policies tend to be found in states with high minority populations (Amrein & Berliner, 2002). In Georgia, “no students from well-to- do counties failed any of the tests [Graduation Test] and more than half exceeded standards” (Amrein & Berliner, 2002, p. 12). . Minority students from low socio economic backgrounds need to be reached the most, so it is alarming when students of minority backgrounds are targeted. Students in Texas, a state with a high number of Hispanics, are reported as not receiving a well rounded education in social studies because the tests focus on minimum competency (Haney, 2000). The tests are dominating classroom practices.

Paula, a third year Global Studies teacher in New York, recounts “generally I think it's [the high stakes test] forced me to teach history in a way that I'm philosophically at odds with...in a way that I don't think kids are going to remember or care about, and I feel obligated to do that because of this test at the end” (Grant, 2003, p. 138). Another teacher laments that it is sad that two years of study has been reduced to 50 questions and simple essays (Grant et al, 2002). Many argue that the tests designed to measure learning are poor measures of what students know and there is a disconnect with higher standards (Grant et al, 2002). The tests in these examples seem to exclude students and decrease examples of true learning, almost the complete opposite of the positive examples. Exploring the impact of high stakes testing is considerably complex and varied. This situation makes finding a direct connection between high stakes testing and teacher decision making almost impossible.

The literature suggests a wide range of relationships from eliminating teachers' power to empowering teachers. What conclusion can researchers make given this contradictory data? I suggest what we know is that teachers have the power to be gatekeepers of the curriculum but external barriers such as the stakes tied to the tests, school environment, and their own belief systems often stop them from making bold moves. It is very difficult to be the one teacher who bucks the system, often causing a teacher to make different decisions if they were in a different situation. These external barriers are growing because of the NCLB legislation. These barriers are becoming more difficult to overcome. It is creating a culture where social studies is devalued as a subject. This places the gatekeeping role of teachers in jeopardy. As states reduce and/or eliminate social studies instruction the situation is becoming more perilous. While the research portrays positive examples of teachers using the standards, there is a growing number of reports, especially in high stakes states, of teachers who are succumbing to the pressures of the test. The literature suggests social studies teachers need to guard social studies classes and instruction.

The time has come for teachers to be daring and ensure that social studies maintain its role in schools. The purpose of this study is to enrich the literature on this topic so that researchers, and educators alike can better understand the relationship between high stakes testing and teachers' choices so that teachers can be empowered to make the bold moves to protect their integrity and the experiences of the students-- student experiences that expand students' activities in social studies classes from listing facts to engaging in content. The literature combined with the gatekeeping philosophy established in chapter one is an important part of my methodology and data analysis as I try to explain, understand and provide guidance to educators and researchers.

Chapter 3- Methodology

Given the aim of this study and the theoretical framework, multiple data sources are essential to explain the complex interactions among gatekeeping, instructional choices, stakes tied to tests, school environment, teacher' beliefs, state mandated tests, state standards, etc. To adequately answer the research questions, a combination of interviews and questionnaires are needed. The research design is influenced by the work of Conklin (2010), as she combined interviews and questionnaires to achieve a more complete understanding of the research. Drawing on this work, I used interviews to provide an “in-depth account of participants’ thoughts, feelings, attitudes and recollections” (Ho, et al., 2006, p. 211). Questionnaires provided a more complete picture of the participants’ “characteristics, attitudes, and beliefs” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p.125). I used data from these sources to create a bounded case study or a collective case study, so that I could draw conclusions about the group as a whole. A bounded case study is also called a collective case study by Stake (1995) or a multiple case study by Yin (2003). “A multiple or collective case study will allow the researcher to analyze within each setting and across settings” (Baxter and Jack, 2008). While the study is limited by the contextual nature of one county in Georgia, the concern of this study is to better understand the impact of state mandated tests on instructional choices and gatekeeping for this particular group of teachers. Furthermore this study will expand the discourse surrounding state mandated testing and gatekeeping.

In this study, I examined how 8th - 12th grade social studies teachers were affected by state mandated tests and the standards associated with them. I chose eighth through twelfth-

grade teachers because of the stakes or lack of stakes tied to tests at these levels. Eighth grade students must take the social studies portion of the CRCT, however this test is not directly tied to the retention and promotion of students, nor is it tied to the final grade of the students. However, there are perceived stakes for the teachers as the scores of their students are tied to each teacher. The 9th through 12th graders must pass the social studies portion of the GHSGT in their junior year. These stakes were important as I investigated two key questions in this one Georgia County's middle and high school social studies programs.

1. How do state mandated tests influence social studies teachers' curricular, instructional, and assessment choices?
2. What is the relationship between standardization and social studies teachers' gatekeeping role?

Site Selection

I selected Northeast County³, a rural Georgia county located outside a major metropolitan area, because of its location and my personal relationship with the county. Northeast County is one of the fastest growing counties in Georgia and is close to a major metropolitan area. The growing diversity of the county and its rural history represent a growing trend in Georgia counties surrounding metropolitan areas. However, the county is also an anomaly because its' high white population is not representative of most counties in the state of Georgia. Given, Northeast County is both unique and representative; it is a prime location because the study could be used to represent a variety of places in the state. The current population of Northeast County is over 40,000 people, with 16 schools and over 11,000 students ("Public Schools Review" n.d.). The average income of \$25,000 in the county is above the state average and 16 % of the total population has a college degree ("Public Schools Review" n.d.). Northeast county's

³ Northeast County is a pseudonym.

population is mostly white with 79 %, higher than the state average, and the other 21 % made up of other races with African American being the primary minority group, which is below the state average (“Public Schools Review” n.d.). Students in Northeast County schools have a diverse socioeconomic background given 21 % are eligible for free lunch, 8 % reduced lunch, with the rest paying full price for their lunches (“Public Schools Review” n.d.). There is also a growing population of English as a Second Language Learners and a significant special education population in Northeast County (“Public Schools Review” n.d.). While the county is not very ethnically diverse it has some socioeconomic diversity.

Northeast County also represents a good research site because it typifies a county in transition from rural to suburban. As such, it provides information that can be compared to both rural and suburban areas. In this scenario, the state is an essential part of the equation as all state mandated tests have to be sent to the state to be graded and grades are returned 1-week to 6 weeks later. Test administration and training are handled through other departments in the school and there is no dedicated testing coordinator at the school level. Given the situational nature of this research, it is not generalizable but it can inform other areas in Georgia. The study can provide a clearer picture of what is occurring in the state of Georgia.

Finally I chose Northeast County because I teach in this county, at one of the high schools included in the study. As such, I have a personal relationship with the district and understand the role of high stakes testing in the district. This relationship caused some difficulty, as I had to choose participants from my own school based on the responses to their questionnaires, instead of personal relationships. I was extremely careful in my decision-making often second-guessing my decisions to ensure they were based on data, not these personal relationships. One way I ensured my decisions were data driven was my method of entering data

into SPSS. As I entered data into SPSS, I omitted each teacher's school from the database. This helped me choose interview participants, based on the information gathered instead of other factors. While choosing to include my own school and district caused some problems, the trade off was access and I chose access.

Overview of Methods

I designed this case study to examine both teachers' individual perspectives and a broad view of one county as a whole. These combined different points of view offer a more complete picture of the impact state mandated testing in this county. The combination of these different data sources was essential to understanding the relationship between the test and teachers' curricular choices and their role in the process.

I used the qualitative component to capture how individual teachers were negotiating the demands of NCLB. Marshall and Rossman (2006) explain, "many qualitative studies are descriptive and exploratory: they build rich descriptions of complex circumstances" (p. 33). This was an essential part of my study. Given the contextual nature of standardization in schools and classrooms, a qualitative study was the best method of exploration. I used interview data from teachers at different grade levels, different experience levels, and different schools to capture the complexities of what was occurring in relationship to instructional choices and gatekeeping in this one county. A case study was ideal because its purpose is to capture the complexities of individual cases (Stake, 1995, p. xi). A case study was also essential because its purpose is to answer how and why questions (Stake, 1995). However, as I wanted to capture the whole county I decided to take a multiple case study approach. A multiple case study approach allowed me to explore differences within and between cases (Yin, 2003). Then, I was able to take those

difference and similarities and create a bounded case that portrayed the intricacies of teaching in Northeast County. Stake (2005) explains:

Individual cases in the collection may or may not be known in advance to manifest some common characteristic. They may be similar or dissimilar, with redundancy and variety each important. They are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, and perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases. (pp. 445-446).

Given, the bounded case approach, I was able to theorize about the social studies teachers in Northeast County. The interview data and case study is one of the most effective ways to explore the complex interactions between standardization and the instructional choices and gatekeeping.

By using a questionnaire, a quantitative component, a broader perspective of teachers' experiences in these classrooms could be achieved. The responses to the questionnaires were used to generate the semi structured interview questions. The results were also used to determine if there were patterns of behavior within the district with regards to standardization, and explain some of the contextual factors of the district (i.e., teachers' beliefs about testing, the stakes tied to the test in the county, and any unique factors that could be used to explain how standardization impacts this specific group of teachers). These questionnaires were used to create a more complete picture of what is occurring in this district. By including both quantitative and qualitative data, a mixed methods approach, I was able to create a more complete picture of what is occurring in one school district (Cresswell, 2003).

Quantitative Components

I used a deductive approach while exploring the quantitative data. The literature suggested that state mandated tests are impacting teachers but the exact impact is unclear.

Cresswell (2003) suggests that when using a deductive quantitative approach, the research is attempting to “advance” and “verify,” a theory (p. 125-126). I hope to advance the discourse on state mandated tests and give insight to the impact on instruction. The data was then examined using the lens of Thornton, who suggests that teachers act as gatekeepers for educational policy (1991). This was an important element of exploration because if teachers have no role in the implementation of these tests or the standards, then other players in the educational process need to be surveyed instead of teachers. However, if Thornton's premise is true then standards and the accountability tests should have little impact on the individual choices of teachers--instead other factors would influence these decisions. This study investigates these relationships and their impact on teacher decision-making.

I originally developed this questionnaire as part of an independent study class taken in the fall of 2008, where I administered it to 29 teachers enrolled in Education Graduate Programs at Southeastern University⁴. The instrument design was loosely based on a survey given by Duke and Tucker (2003) on the impact of standardized testing in Virginia. The Duke and Tucker (2003) survey was designed to assess administrators and department chairs so I made changes to meet the specific demands of my research questions. I piloted this instrument by surveying teachers at Southeastern University enrolled in a Educations Graduate Program. I used these results in a purely quantitative manner and did not report the findings. Instead, I used the results to modify the questionnaire given in Fall 2008 to its current form that can be seen in Appendix A.

I changed the original questionnaire, given in Fall 2008, to include a section about the types of assessment items used in the era of state mandated tests and to include questions more closely aligned with the different curriculum implementation approaches in order to highlight the

⁴ Southeastern University is a pseudonym.

gatekeeping role. Other minor changes were made to ensure the questionnaire was geared specifically to social studies teachers. Questions on the survey include a mix of general ideas about state mandated tests and questions that address how these tests affect personal practices, in a Likert scale format, such as “I feel the test narrows my ability to cover material.” Other items addressed on the questionnaire include how state mandated tests affect assessment and instructional practices such as, “How much do state mandated tests affect your instructional choices?” The final part of the questionnaire is related to how much time teachers spend on test preparation and general background information.

Questionnaires (see Appendix A) were sent to all 38 grade 8- 12 social studies teachers in Northeast County via mail. I sent the first questionnaires out in March of 2010, following up with a second set in April 2010 for those who had not returned their questionnaire. These teachers were also sent an e-mail to notify them that the survey would be arriving and to please return the questionnaire in 2 weeks. I sent an e-mail reminder two days before the due date.

Twenty-six questionnaires were returned, coded, and then entered into SPSS. I used SPSS to explore frequency distribution tables of data and to examine correlations between variables. After a preliminary examination of the data, I used the data to select nine interview participants to represent different aspects of the impact of high stakes testing. I will discuss the emerging patterns in both the quantitative and qualitative data more thoroughly in the findings section in combination with the interview data.

The nine interview participants I chose represent the diversity of instructional choices in the collective case study. I made every attempt to include teachers from different content areas, teachers at different stages of their careers, ethnicity, location, and age in order to create a better picture of how instructional choices are being affected by standardization. The

interview participants were chosen because of their unique characteristics that inform the research study, as they represent the different aspects that I suspect may impact this research study. I chose these characteristics to focus on because state mandated tests and standards were created in 2000 when almost all states had developed content standards as a result of the Quality Basic Education Act of 1985,(Goertz & Duffy 2001; Independent Review Panel, 2001; U.S. Department of Education; Heinecke et al., 2003, Barbour et al., 2007). Teachers who taught before the implementation of the standards have a valuable perspective, so career stage is important. Age is also influential because it can be used to determine previous experiences with the tests and standards. Content is perhaps one of the most important elements because the content determines how a teacher views the test. Location is important because each school's environment is different. These deviations make each situation unique and a valuable piece of Northeast County. The nine participants also represent the gender and ethnicity of the sample.

Qualitative Components

As I made decisions about interview participants, I considered them on an individual basis and how they contributed to the group as a whole. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), this study represents both the individuals in the in-depth interviews and the group in its case study component. I chose one teacher who teaches a class not directly governed by state mandates, instead by the College Board standards. Another participant represents the impact of the tests in non-traditional locations, addressing the perspective of location. I picked the other seven participants to represent the different subject areas in the study; Georgia Studies, World History, U.S. History, American Government, and Economics. Table 3.1 summarizes why the nine teachers were chosen as participants in the study.

Table 3.1- Interview Participants

Participant	Reason Chosen	State Mandated Test	Location ⁵
Ms. Green	Subject Area	CRCT Social Studies	Martin Van Buren Middle School
Ms. Black	Subject Area	CRCT Social Studies	Ulysses S. Grant Middle School
Ms. Plum	Location	GHS GT Social Studies U.S. History EOCT Economics EOCT	Abraham Lincoln High School
Mr. Gray	Governed by College Board instead of State Mandates	GHS GT Social Studies	George Washington High School
Ms. Violet	Subject Area and Teaching Experience	GHS GT Social Studies U.S. EOCT	George Washington High School
Mr. Blue	Subject Area	GHS GT Social Studies U.S. EOCT	Benjamin Harrison High School
Mr. Red	Subject Area and Teaching Experience	GHS GT Social Studies Economics EOCT	Benjamin Harrison High School
Mr. Gold	Subject Area	GHS GT Social Studies U.S. EOCT	Benjamin Harrison High School
Ms. Yellow	Subject Area	GHS GT Social Studies	Benjamin Harrison High School

I interviewed all participants using a semi-structured interview protocol, designed after the initial quantitative analysis (Appendix B). The questions focus on the participant responses to five specific questions from the questionnaire and several quotes that portray gatekeeping. I asked each participant to elaborate on why they chose the answers they did on the questionnaire for the 5 questions taken from the survey. For the quotes about gatekeeping, I asked each participant if they agreed or disagreed and asked them to explain their choice. Table 3.2 displays the questions and quotes that were used as the basis of the interview questions.

⁵ All location names are pseudonyms.

Table 3.2

I teach to the state mandated test in social studies. [Likert Scale]
I teach only what is on the state mandated test in social studies. [Likert Scale]
The state mandated tests narrow the curriculum. [Likert Scale]
The state mandated tests affect the types of assessments I give. [Likert Scale]
Which of these teachers BEST represents your approach to state mandated tests in social studies?
Teachers must move too quickly in order to cover all required material in social studies [Likert Scale]
The recall of facts is being overemphasized in social studies. [Likert Scale]
The format of the State Mandated Test affects my instructional choices [Likert Scale]
How would your instructional choices be different if you did not have a state mandated test in social studies?
Quotes
“gatekeeping encompasses the decisions teachers make about curriculum and instruction and the criteria they use to make those decisions”--Thornton
“curriculum planning is a continuous process that, as materials and procedures are developed, they are tried out, their results appraised, their inadequacies identified, suggested improvements indicated; there is preplanning, redevelopment and then reappraisal; and in this kind of continuing cycle, it is possible, for the curriculum and instructional program, to be continuously improved over the years” ----Tyler
“high stakes tests ... reshape student-teacher relationships and define what an educated person should know, understand, and be able to do, and what should be taught and learned”---Madaus, et al.
“classrooms are where teachers make choices at the intersection of boundaries, expectations, and challenges.”--Webeck et al.

I interviewed each participant for 1 to 1.5 hours. These interviews followed the patterns established by Patton (2002) and Khan and Cannell (1957) as they were informal and conversational with a clear purpose. In essence, the interview process served as an opportunity for each participant to explain and illuminate why they responded to the questionnaire the way they did, and also to tie these responses to the bigger issue of gatekeeping. As these interviews were audio recorded, I made notes of emerging themes and ideas that occurred during the interview process. I had all interviews transcribed, then I coded the interviews using major predetermined themes, such as the impact on assessment, impact on planning, impact on instructional method, impact on decision-making, and the relationship to teachers' gatekeeper

role and other emergent themes that came from the interviews and questionnaires. Emergent themes included the differences between teacher perceptions of GHSGT, EOCTs, and CRCTs, the perceived problems of state mandates and associated testing in U.S. History, and the enemy of time given the state mandated tests. I identified these emergent themes using “inductive analysis involving the discovery of patterns, themes, and categories” (Patton, 2002, p. 453). I created these patterns, themes, and categories as well as sub themes within the major themes, such as the impact of teaching experience and subject matter on the perception of these tests, given the context of the study. As patterns emerged, I looked for confirming and disconfirming data within the interviews and the questionnaires. I coded all data and analyzed it in accordance with the research questions and theoretical framework. As more data was collected themes were added and refined to improve the analysis process.

Researcher Role

Lenses I Bring

There are five characteristics that play a large role in how I conducted and analyzed my research: my gender, my job as a Social Studies teacher, my teaching philosophy, my double role as teacher and researcher and finally my belief that the importance placed on high stakes testing in today's system is causing teachers to make decisions that are not in the best interest of students.

First, I am a female in a research field that is dominated by males. Comparatively, there are fewer women in both the Social Studies Research field and in the Social Studies teaching field. This could strain my interaction with male teachers. They may feel uncomfortable sharing their ideas about teaching under high stakes test. In the role of a researcher, I also had to be careful to include a representative sample of males and females. As a female in the field, I found

myself gravitating to other females. So as I considered interview participants, I had to constantly question my reasons for choosing participants, to ensure I was not choosing more women because of my own comfort level. While I do not see my gender as a hindrance, it does shape my perceptions of social studies, so it was important to acknowledge that it could influence my decision-making.

Second, I am a Social Studies teacher. I am actively participating in the teaching world that is governed by state mandated testing. I am an insider to the system, because I work in the schools. I know my way around the system and also the general rumblings about the impact of state mandated testing in social studies. While I am an insider, it is possible that I could face more resistance because I am asking people to discuss something that is extremely personal and influences their professional lives. When I piloted the study in all subject areas with teachers enrolled in Education Graduate Programs, they were outsiders. They were responding to a survey about a topic conducted by someone who was not involved in their teaching. As outsiders to Northeast County, these teachers had no emotional or personal relationships embedded in the research, like those in my own research study. As a teacher within the system, I also am personally tied to the research. This research is extremely important to me because I truly want my students to have an engaging and enriching social studies experience.

Third, I believe social studies education should empower students to make necessary decisions in their own life. My teaching philosophy is one of the main reasons I chose to conduct this research--so it is important to acknowledge these beliefs. I believe:

- All students are different, but these differences make them who they are
- Differences enrich each student's experience
- Regardless of the differences, all students can learn and succeed

- The role of the teacher is to facilitate knowledge and help students to become lifelong learners
- Every student is entitled to an education
- Every student should feel safe in my classroom
- I should challenge and encourage learners so that they can become responsible citizens
- The role of the teacher is to help all students to succeed
- Critical thinking and higher order thinking are fundamental tools for all students

My beliefs about teaching are clearly displayed in my teaching and research style. This dual role also impacts how I conducted the research. Often I was torn as I made decisions about the study—torn between my desires to provide proof for the grumblings about the impact of state mandated tests, then pulled by my desire to have a ‘valid and reliable’ study. I often felt as though I was moving from my role as a researcher conducting a case study to an action researcher. I was in essence trying to solve a problem in my county and in my own classroom. Although that is not the intent of this research study, long term I hope that this research will help teachers better negotiate the current standards based system. So this dual role influenced how I designed this study and how I ultimately examined the data.

Finally, I do not believe that one test can accurately assess a child. The current system where graduation is tied to one test is alarming. I contemplated whether or not to include this bias because I did not want to imply that this was so important that it might cause me to compromise my own research. While I am unhappy with the current high stakes system and I believe that a variety of assessments must be used to determine what students learn, I think teachers should be conducting a variety of assessments in their own classrooms, removed from

the state or at least in accordance with the state. There is a need to connect assessments *of* learning, or high stakes tests, and assessments *for* learning to ongoing assessments that occur in the classroom (Nichols & Berliner, 2008; Reeves, et al., 2007). The best way to deal with high stakes tests is what Cuban (2009) suggests in the title of his book *Hugging the Middle*--finding a balance between the demands of NCLB and classroom assessments. This is the belief that I subscribe to and this impacts how and why I chose to conduct this research. This makes this study even more personal for me.

Researching In My Own Backyard

The Researcher Role

During my research, my fundamental role was as an interviewer; as such I did not interact with the participants, in regards to the research, except when I was conducting the interviews. This was often difficult because I work in the same building and department with four of the participants.

While conducting interviews, I asked participants if they would like to choose their own pseudonym. All but one told me I could choose their pseudonym, Mr. Blue's decision to choose his own name inspired the aliases of the other participants. After the interviews were transcribed I sent the transcripts to the participants and invited them to check the content to ensure the accuracy of the interviews. I also offered each participant a summary of my findings. I think these steps helped the process because the participants had some ownership of the data, which in turn, brought more detailed responses. This step also provided some self- accountability for my decision-making. Knowing that I would share the transcripts and data analysis summary made me more carefully consider my own choices, forcing me to make sure everything was clearly grounded in the data and not clouded by my own personal beliefs.

Issues of Confidentiality

Conducting research in my county with participants who work in the same school as I posed several problems, but also made the research process much simpler. Stake (2000) suggests that one of the issues associated with research is how much the researcher should discuss their research with the participants. Given, I have both social and professional relationships with four of the participants this became problematic. It was often difficult to not discuss the research. As participants at my school discussed their interviews and responses, I questioned whether I should chime in or stay out of the conversation. I also questioned how much to divulge, given I had offered confidentiality to my participants. This tight rope was further complicated because many of the participants had almost taken my doctoral journey with me, because I started the program at the same time as I started my job. I had previously discussed my research interests with the participants and so stopping those open conversations was extremely difficult. Interestingly I did not face these issues while gathering quantitative data only when I started the interview process. Knowing my institution was extremely helpful in negotiating the system but it also often ‘forced’ certain decisions.

The Decisions

One decision that I made early on was not to include where the participants taught in my SPSS data file. This helped me to blindly choose participants based on the data, not where teachers taught. However in the same respect, as I attempted to choose people that were a good representation of the sample I had to go back to ensure a balanced sample.

Another decision that I made was to eliminate my own team teacher as a possible participant because we work very closely together and plan together--I feared that her responses would reflect my own practices not her own. I worried that including her would cross the line

between my role as a researcher and my role as her co teacher in our classes. While I did include her in the quantitative data, my choice to not include her as a participant brought about a new concern.

For those people in my own building, I struggled with whether to discuss why they were not chosen. Many people in my building wanted to know, so ultimately I chose to tell the teachers why I did not choose them. I did not feel that I violated any confidentiality because I did not report the findings for those people, except in a quantitative manner that had no identifying characteristics. I pondered this question at great length and I am happy with my choice but I did not anticipate this problem.

In this section, I have outlined how the research was organized and why I made the decisions that I made. In the next chapter I will introduce my participants and their locations and provide more details about the uniqueness and differences of each participant and their location.

Chapter 4-The Participants and Their Location

The purpose of this chapter is to establish both the context of the study and to introduce the teachers from Northeast County who were interviewed. The setting and participants are important elements because the bounded case study approach established in Chapter 3 implies that by understanding the group then a better understanding of the whole can be achieved (Stake, 1995). The participants for this study represent a wide variety of 8th–12th grade teachers in Northeast County. The basic demographics of all 26 participants that responded to the questionnaire are provided in Table 4.1. The table provides details about the race, gender, teaching experience, age, and education level of both the participants and their parents. The goal of sharing these demographics is to build a complete portrait of these participants and their backgrounds, so that connections can be examined in this study. Then, future researchers can use this data to make connections to similar participants and schools in different counties across the nation.

Thirty-eight questionnaires were sent out to Northeast County's four middle schools, two traditional high schools, and the non-traditional high school. At each middle school there are two eighth grade teachers; five of the eight returned their questionnaire but only two agreed to participate in the interview process. At Benjamin Harrison High School, thirteen of the fourteen teachers agreed to an interview. At George Washington High School six of the eleven social studies teachers participated in the questionnaire and three of the six teachers agreed to an interview. At Abraham Lincoln High School, there is only one social studies teacher and she agreed to be part of the interview process.

Of the 26 participants, all are white with twelve females and fourteen males. The average age of all participants is 39 years old, however the median age is slightly lower at 34 years old. On average teachers in this study have taught 9 years, which is consistent with the majority of Northeast County's teachers who have taught for 5-10 years (www.doe.k12.ga.us). There were more men in the study than women, which is inconsistent with the averages for the county, where 70 % of the teachers in Northeast County are female (www.doe.k12.ga.us). At both the middle school and high school level there are more females than males, with 60 % of the social studies teachers being female. However, this disparity is due to the larger number of males at the high school level, who are males as 14 out of the 24 social studies teachers in the high schools are male. The majority of participants in the study have a Masters' Degree, which is also consistent with Northeast County's averages (www.doe.k12.ga.us).

Table 4.1. Demographics

	Participants N=26	Percentages N=26
Number of Teachers surveyed	26	
Middle School	5	19 %
High School	21	81%
Female	12	46 %
Male	14	54%
White/Caucasian	25	
No response	1	
Average Age	39	
Average number of Years Teaching	9	
Teacher Education Level		
Bachelors	7	27 %
Masters	16	62%
Specialist	3	11%

Father's highest education level		
Less than a high school diploma	2	8 %
High School Diploma or GED	5	19 %
Some College	5	19 %
College degree	6	23 %
Post Graduate or Professional Degree	8	31%
Mother's highest education level		
Less than a high school diploma		
High School Diploma or GED	6	23 %
Some College	6	23 %
College degree	11	42 %
Post Graduate or Professional Degree	3	12 %
Number of survey participants who agreed to interviews	19	73 %

The parents in this study have achieved a variety of educational levels. The majority of the teachers' parents hold a college degree or higher. The participants as a whole do a good job of representing the teachers in Northeast County. One element that may be concerning is the lack of ethnic diversity in the study. While the group does not represent much ethnic diversity, this is consistent with demographics of Northeast County teachers where the majority of teachers are white (www.doe.k12.ga.us).

The Middle School Interview Participants

Two middle school teachers participated in the interview process: Ms. Green from Martin Van Buren Middle School and Ms. Black from Ulysses S. Grant Middle School. These participants represent teachers who teach GA Studies, which has a required CRCT at the end of the year. However, the CRCT is not tied to the retention or promotion of students, nor does the

test impact GPA or final grades. While the intent of the CRCT was to tie all core academic areas to promotion and/or retention, after problems with the tests results, the state changed these plans. The middle school teachers also teach in a different context than high school teachers, because the students at the high school level must pass the social studies portion of the high school graduation test to graduate, while at the middle school, only Math and English Language Arts are directly tied to retention and/or promotion of students. These teachers represent a different perspective of how tests impact decision-making. Each participant also represents a different school context because students who attend Martin Van Buren Middle School will attend George Washington High School and those attending Ulysses S. Grant Middle School will attend Benjamin Harrison High School.

Ms. Green and Martin Van Buren Middle School

Of Martin Van Buren Middle School's 723 students, 63 % are white, 15% are African Americans, and 22% are other minority groups (greatschools.org). As shown in Table 4.2, the white population of Martin Van Buren is above the state average while the African American population is below the state average (greatschools.org).

Table 4.2- Demographics Martin Van Buren and Ulysses S. Grant v. State

Ethnicity	Ulysses S. Grant	Martin Van Buren	State Average
White	68%	63%	46%
Black	9%	15%	38%
Hispanic	9%	11%	10%
Asian	11%	7%	3%
Multi-Racial	2%	3%	3%
American Indian	<1%	<1%	<1%

Source: GA Dept. of Education, 2007-2008-
Greatschools.org

Martin Van Buren Middle School's economically disadvantaged population is 6 % below the state average of 50%, yet the students with disabilities and limited English proficiency are within 2 percent of the state averages (greatschools.org). Martin Van Buren scored well above the state average of 59% on the social studies portion of the CRCT with its 80.5% pass rate (www.doe.k12.ga.us). As a school, Martin Van Buren consistently scores above the state average in all subject areas.

Ms. Green is a 33-year-old white teacher who has been teaching for 10 years and currently teaches Georgia Studies at Martin Van Buren Middle School. Both her parents received post graduate or professional degrees and she currently has a Masters Degree and is pursuing her Specialist Degree. Ms. Green has one of the more positive views of state mandated tests. When discussing the impact of state mandated tests, she states:

The quality of the instruction has increased because there are more resources out there and there is a collaboration that is happening within our county of the people from the different middle schools trying to work together. And so state mandated tests--they have helped.

She also believes that while tests may limit the time she spends on certain topics, she thinks that the trade off between these limitations and the overall impact is acceptable. She says:

I may value a particular unit or topic more than another--I'm not going to spend four weeks on civil rights because I think it is you know ideally the most important lesson for them to learn. If that was going to take away from me being able to teach them about the colonial period of Georgia I may see less importance in the colonial period but that is part of what I'm supposed to teach.

Theoretically the test has very low stakes tied to it, therefore her comments are an important part of this case study. Ms. Green is one of the two middle school teachers who teach GA Studies in this study.. Her case was chosen because she teaches a class that is not tied to promotion, nor is the test a part of the students' final grade.

Ulysses S. Grant Middle School and Ms. Black

Ulysses S. Grant Middle School has 681 students and the majority of its students are white, however Martin Van Buren, Ulysses S. Grant has a larger Asian population than Martin Van Buren with 11 %, which is eight percent higher than the state average. Ulysses S. Grant also has as a lower African American population than the state average with only 9 %, as shown in Table 4.2. Ulysses S. Grant Middle School is a rather typical school in GA when looking at the economically disadvantaged and limited proficiency percentages; Ulysses S. Grant's numbers are the same as the state average. One of the statistics that sets Ulysses S. Grant apart from other schools in GA, as shown in Table 4.3, is the number of teachers at Ulysses S. Grant who hold Specialists and Masters Degrees is higher than the state and Martin Van Buren. Test scores for Ulysses S. Grant Middle School on the social studies CRCT are lower than the state average with a pass rate of only 55.5 %

Table 4.3 Teacher Statistics

Degree Level	Ulysses S. Grant	Martin Van Buren	State Average
Masters	55%	50%	44%
Specialist	18%	7%	14%

Source: GA Dept. of Education, 2007-2008- greatschools.org

Ms. Black is a 60-year-old white teacher with 20 years of teaching experience. Ms. Black does not represent the typical teacher in Northeast County, as most of the teachers in Northeast County have taught between 1-10 years. Both Ms. Black's parents have a college degree and her mother has a post graduate degree. Ms. Black's perspective on the test is not as positive as her middle school counter part. She explains:

I think really, what bothers me with [the test] is that I have to take the fun stuff out sometimes...So we're just trudging away at the book and the material and occasionally I'll try to throw something in.

Ms. Black is only one of two teachers in this study that taught in Georgia before the onset of state mandated testing, so her perspective offered something that many of the other participants could not. She believes that:

the GPS it basically outlines how and what they want us to do. Especially when they give you page numbers and activities and resources that the state is trying to say this is the way we want you to do it. Whether you do it or not is another thing. But they are trying their very best to tell you how to do it.

Ms. Black was able to discuss what teaching was like before tests governed curriculum choices, which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

The High School Interview Participants

The majority of interview participants teach at the high school level. There are two teachers from George Washington High, Mr. Gray and Ms. Violet. The only social studies teacher at Abraham Lincoln High, Ms. Plum also participated in the study. The final four participants, Mr. Blue, Mr. Red, Mr. Gold, and Ms. Yellow, teach at Benjamin Harrison High

School. Within this pool of participants, there are teachers that teach World History, U.S. History, Economics, American Government, and a variety of combinations of these subjects. Teachers that teach the U.S. History and Economics courses are governed by an EOCT at the end of each semester, while World History, U.S. History, and American Government courses are tested on the GHSGT, at the end of students' junior year. At all high schools in Northeast County, American Government is taught in the junior year, so more focus is placed on the GHSGT during this class. Mr. Red explains how during the spring when the GHSGT is given, he alters his sequence and is unable to flesh out certain details because of the test in March. Each teacher and location offers a different perspective that contributes to the case study of Northeast County.

Ms. Plum and Abraham Lincoln High School

Abraham Lincoln High School is the most unique location, as it is a non-traditional learning environment that has an enrollment cap of 75 students. Abraham Lincoln High is not a disciplinary alternative school, according to the Northeast County⁶ website:

Abraham Lincoln High School⁷ serves high school students who are not succeeding in a traditional school setting and who typically

- Lack interest in a traditional school environment and are seeking another learning option
- Experience poor academic achievement
- Are chronically late to or absent from school
- Are at high risk of dropping out of school

⁶ The real name of the school was replaced with a pseudonym.

⁷ The real name of the school was replaced with a pseudonym.

Abraham Lincoln High School merges a computer driven curriculum with one- on- one attention, hands-on activities, notebooks, and project based learning aligned with the GPS (www.northeastcounty.k12.ga.us)⁸. Few statistics are offered for Abraham Lincoln High School because the students that attend are grouped with the two traditional high schools and there are very few teachers because of the nature of instruction. When students of Abraham Lincoln High School take state mandated tests, their data is included in the high school in which they are zoned for, so it is embedded in the data of George Washington High School and Benjamin Harrison High School.

Ms. Plum is a 57 year-old white teacher who teaches all the social studies classes at Abraham Lincoln High School. Ms. Plum has been teaching for 13 years and currently holds a Specialist Degree. She is also in the process of getting her Ph.D. Both her parents have a college diploma, and her father has a post secondary/professional degree. Ms. Plum has some mixed feelings about the test. While she feels she has more flexibility to meet the kids where they are, than in a traditional class environment because of the class size and the nature of instruction at Abraham Lincoln High School, she is still concerned with the test, as illustrated in her statement below:

I think that the tests prevent me from following the kids' lead. From being able to you know we could go a million different ways when they've got one question and the luxury of being able to sit down next to a kid and go, "hey let's look at this. Let's talk about this" is great. But then you know time constraints bring me back to...is it on the graduation test?

⁸ This is not the real website but is consistent with the pseudonym.

Ms. Plum also explains that when she thinks about how the state mandated test impacts her decision-making she says “I think that there are things I cannot do... That I cannot do because I will put my students in the position to fail.” Ms. Plum offers an important point of view because she has taught under state mandated tests in both traditional and non-traditional settings and she teaches all testable subjects in social studies. So throughout her interview she was able to compare different scenarios and situations by location, subject area, and various state mandated tests.

George Washington High School and Mr. Gray and Ms. Violet

George Washington High School has an enrollment of 1586 students. George Washington’s demographics are very similar to those of its feeder middle school Martin Van Buren, within a few percentage points. George Washington High School does have a lower number of economically disadvantaged students however, this decrease could be insignificant, as fewer high school students sign up for free and reduced lunch, a major indicator of socioeconomic status, and there are more vending machine options at the high school than the middle school (Creighton, 2007). With more vending options such as pop tarts, chips, and soda, some students at the high school level choose to eat from vending machines rather than in the cafeteria, skewing the socioeconomic indicator of free and reduced lunch. Fifty one percent of the 110 teachers at George Washington have a Master’s Degree and twelve percent have a Specialist Degree (greatschools.org). These numbers are again similar to the statistics of the feeder middle school within a few percentage points. Like Martin Van Buren, George Washington High School tends to score well on the state mandated tests with EOCT scores above the state averages (www.doe.k12.ga.us). Although, George Washington High’s GHSGT scores in social studies

were two percent below the state average, George Washington still out performed Benjamin Harrison (www.doe.k12.ga.us). A comparison of test scores between the two traditional high schools and the state can be seen in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 – Test Score Comparison of Pass Rates

Test	George Washington	Benjamin Harrison	State
U.S. History EOCT	56.7 %	55.9%	52%
Economics EOCT	78.2%	71.5%	70%
GHS GT	85%	84%	87%

www.doe.k12.ga.us

Two teachers, Mr. Gray and Ms. Violet from George Washington High School were interviewed. Mr. Gray is a white, 28 year old teacher at George Washington High School. He has been teaching for 5 years and currently teaches World History, Honors World History, and AP European History. There is a World History portion on the GHS GT but Mr. Gray does not seem very worried about this test, as he explains “the graduation test number one doesn’t cover half of my course and number two doesn’t occur until three years after they’ve had the class. I feel a great deal of freedom to interpret the curriculum, as I will.” However, he adds that in a class with a SMT like Economics, a subject he previously taught, his decision-making is much different. He explains in these classes the test “affects my decisions in regard to pacing, assessment and curriculum. I am much more cognizant of my pacing and my curriculum and my assessment when I’m teaching a class with a mandated test.” Mr. Gray is also the only AP teacher interviewed in the study, which offers a different perspective of testing because while not a state mandated test, high stakes are tied to AP tests. Mr. Gray has a Masters degree and both his parents have a college degree with his mother holding a post secondary/professional degree. Mr. Gray was chosen because of his free response on the questionnaire where he explained how

he currently teaches a course [World History] that “is not directly affected by a state mandated test.”

The second teacher chosen from George Washington High School is Ms. Violet, a 26-year-old white teacher. She represents one of the youngest participants and the high school teachers with the least amount of teaching experience. She only has two years of experience and comments how she has never known anything but GPS driven instruction and testing. Ms. Violet teaches only team- taught U.S. History, which are classes where the number of students with an IEP is much higher than other classes. It also means that she has another teacher in the class at all times. Ms. Violet holds a Bachelor’s degree and both of her parents hold a college degree. Although the material she teaches is tested on both the EOCT and GHSGT, Ms. Violet is not sure if both have the same weight. When asked what tests currently affect her instruction she responded “the EOCT most definitely and most directly. To an extent the graduation test...” She has a rather negative view about the relationship between tests and decision-making. She explains “it’s insulting--like why should I even go to college if you’re just going to lay out exactly what I’m teaching.” Ms. Violet’s interview revealed the most pronounced impact of state mandated tests as she could count the number of items that she teaches that are not on the EOCT.

Benjamin Harrison High School and Mr. Blue, Mr. Red, Mr. Gold, and Ms. Yellow

Benjamin Harrison High School has an enrollment of 1654. The demographics of Benjamin Harrison is fairly similar to Ulysses S. Grant, the feeder middle school. As seen in Table 4.6, Benjamin Harrison has a slightly higher African American population but a little lower Asian and Hispanic populations, with a similar multiracial population and white populations (greatschool.org).

Table 4.6- Demographics Ulysses S. Grant Middle School v. Benjamin Harrison

Ethnicity	Ulysses S. Grant	Benjamin Harrison
White	68%	67%
Black	9%	16%
Hispanic	9%	7%
Asian	11%	7%
Multi-Racial	2%	3%
American Indian	<1%	<1%

Source: GA Dept. of Education, 2007-2008
Greatschools.org

Like George Washington High School the number of students who receive free and reduced lunch is significantly lower than Ulysses S. Grant Middle School. Benjamin Harrison and George Washington have similar statistics on economically disadvantaged, limited English proficiency, and students with disabilities. Benjamin Harrison has fewer teachers with a master's degree than any of the other schools involved in the study, but it also has a relatively high number of teachers with a Specialist Degree. Of the 115 teachers, 17 % have a specialist degree, which is one percent lower than Ulysses S. Grant Middle School but still above the state average (greatschools.org). Benjamin Harrison High School consistently has a lower pass rate than George Washington High School on the social studies EOCTs and the GHSGT. Also seen in Table 4.5, Benjamin Harrison like George Washington High School's EOCT scores were above the state average, with both scoring below the state average on the GHSGT (greatschools.org). More participants come from Benjamin Harrison High School than other locations. There are two possible reasons for this scenario: one, I teach at Benjamin Harrison High School and second, more questionnaires were received from Benjamin Harrison than other locations. There are four participants from this high school, Mr. Blue, Mr. Red, Mr. Gold, and Ms. Yellow.

Mr. Blue is a 26 year-old white teacher at Benjamin Harrison High School. Mr. Blue currently teaches World History and U.S. History. In his three years teaching, he has also taught

one semester of American Government. Mr. Blue is one of the younger participants of the study and he was chosen because he can discuss the difference between subjects tested on the Graduation Test versus an End of Course Test. He is also one of four participants who is the first one in his/her family to receive a bachelor's degree. Mr. Blue says this about the role of state mandated tests:

basically it gives us what will be tested as far as what standards we teach so unfortunately essentially it's kind of the test that we're teaching towards since that's how we will be judged on whether or not we covered the standards.

However he also talks about how when teaching World History he does not feel the same need to teach towards the test. Mr. Blue had an interesting response to the question:

Do state mandated tests affect your role as a teacher as like in your decision-making?

Mr. Blue: I mean I would say yes and no the test doesn't necessarily affect my decisions but at the same time if that is how I will be viewed I want to make sure my students are all prepared for that test.

Mr. Blue's ideas about the differences between the demands of the GHSGT and the EOCT are an important part of the study.

Mr. Red has been teaching for 33 years and was chosen because of his level of experience. He is the only teacher who currently teaches Economics and he also teaches American Government. Mr. Red currently holds a Master's Degree and is the first one in his

family to earn a college degree. His long experience as an educator gives him a unique perspective because he taught before state standards or state mandated tests and he teaches Economics, a course with an EOCT. Mr. Red also has one of the most negative perspectives on the role of state mandated testing. When asked about the overall impact of state mandated testing he says “We’re not teaching thinking anymore; we’re teaching filling in a circle. Teaching this way, teaching now and teaching that I did 20-25 years ago are drastically different.” Mr. Red reiterates this sentiment throughout his interview so he offers some interesting ideas about the role of state mandated testing. He says “It limits what I can teach, how I can teach, when I can teach. It limits the time I can spend on topics.” Mr. Red’s perspective, as a veteran in the teaching profession, provides insight that cannot be gathered by most of the participants.

Mr. Gold is the oldest participant, at 66 years old, but has been teaching for only ten years. He currently teaches U.S. History and sheltered American Government and U.S. History. The sheltered classes are classes for students who have limited English proficiency designed to help those students with little English language background pass the Georgia High School Graduation Test. These classes are unique as they have a cap on enrollment of 18 students and all students have a limited English proficiency. These classes are a rather new type of class and Mr. Gold is the only one at Benjamin Harrison High School to have taught this class in Social Studies. Mr. Gold like other participants from Benjamin Harrison High School, is the first one in his family to earn a college degree. He compares the effects of the state mandated tests as a “forced march to a baton.” He explains that the biggest problem is the impact on the students. He feels that he needs to “Cram this [content] in their minds and make[students] learn it.” Mr. Gold’s work with limited English learners gives him a different perspective because the

reviewed literature suggests that limited English learners, like other minority populations are suffering from state mandated testing (McNeal, 2000).

Ms. Yellow is a 42-year-old World History teacher. She teaches only World History classes and has done so the majority of her career. Ms. Yellow's World History classes include two levels, Advanced (College Prep) World History and Honors World History to 9th grade students. Many of her students in the World History Honors classes are identified as gifted learners so her experience in the classroom is different than many of the other participants. Ms. Yellow believes that state mandated testing has more of an indirect effect on her personal instructional choices as she explains, "both the EOCT and the Georgia high school graduation tests affect my instruction. Not directly. But through the department." However she says in general she believes:

I think they have limited the teacher's creativity and the teacher's ability to go into depth with topics. Because there's pressure to cover a certain amount of standards and a lot of standards.

Ms. Yellow was chosen because she only teaches World History, a class with no EOCT. World History is a freshman class, tested on the GHSGT during the second semester of a students' junior year. No state mandated test directly affects her students, so she offers a balance to those classes more directly affected by testing. Each of the nine interview participants chosen brings a different perspective to the study, creating the bounded study. Consider this allegory: each participant is like a snap shot in a photo album of a wedding. Each portrays some part of the whole event, however without looking at all the pictures it is difficult to ascertain what exactly happened. However all the pictures in the album tell a more complete story of the event. With each participant as a snapshot, all nine as a whole represent the album. Each interview adds to

the story of how state mandated tests are affecting what is happening in today's social studies classrooms. The context of the schools and the individual background of each participant add to the understanding of what is happening in Northeast County.

As a whole, the group represents Northeast County very well. There are teachers at different places in their career from 2nd year teachers to a teacher with 33 years of experience, who retired this year. There are a variety of subjects and locations represented. All the teachers in the study want the best for their students and are concerned with the current educational policies. Table 4.7 provides a summary of all the interview participants. In the next chapter, the perceptions of these participants in relation to the research questions will be explored in detail.

Table 4.7 Interview Participants

Teacher	Years Experience	Age	Subject Areas Taught	School
Ms. Green	10	33	GA Studies	Martin Van Buren Middle School
Ms. Black	20	60	GA Studies	Ulysses S. Grant Middle School
Ms. Plum	13	57	World History U.S. History American Government Economics	Abraham Lincoln High School
Mr. Gray	5	28	World History AP European History Honors World History	George Washington High School
Ms. Violet	2	26	Team Taught U.S. History	George Washington High

			History	School
Mr. Blue	3	26	U.S. History World History	Benjamin Harrison High School
Mr. Red	33	60	American Government Economics	Benjamin Harrison High School
Mr. Gold	10	66	U.S. History Sheltered U.S. History Sheltered American Government	Benjamin Harrison High School
Ms. Yellow	7	42	World History World History Honors	Benjamin Harrison High School

Chapter 5- Findings

In the previous chapter, I have provided an overview of all participants: both those who completed questionnaires and those who were interviewed. I also described the different locations where the participants taught. As each participant was introduced, I provided details about their personal beliefs about the impact of the state mandated test (SMT) and their thoughts on how the SMT influenced their role as a teacher. This context is important, as I now discuss how these teachers' experiences shed some light on the research questions. The research questions again are:

1. How do state mandated tests influence social studies teachers' curricular, instructional, and assessment choices?
2. What is the relationship between standardization and social studies teachers' gatekeeping role?

Each participant illuminates different aspects of these questions and the group as a whole illustrates the overall influence of SMTs. While originally I thought factors like gender and age might impact how teachers answered these key questions, instead, I found content and the hierarchy of content within tested social studies subjects was the primary factor that impacted teachers' decisions. Subjects with a test tied directly to the name of a teacher were viewed as more important than tests tied to a students' retention/promotion. This hierarchy of content is a theme that occurs throughout the analysis so I address this theme before I directly discuss the research questions. Then, I will answer research question number one given the qualitative/quantitative evidence and examine some of the recurring themes within this question.

In the second half of this chapter, I will answer question number two which proves to be rather complex. Interwoven in the data is a dichotomy of what should be occurring in classrooms and what is actually occurring, often further complicated by teachers' perceptions of testing procedures. I also examine how experience level impacts decisions. Throughout the chapter, I discuss the impact of school context often comparing and contrasting the middle school and high school participants. The primary focus of this chapter is to provide some answers to the research questions given these individual school contexts.

Hierarchy of Tests and Content in Social Studies

Before examining the research questions individually, it is important to have a clear understanding of how teachers view the subjects that they teach and the tests that accompany them, because these perceptions impact their choices. As established earlier in this study, stakes tied to the test matter, therefore it is no surprise that the way teachers view these tests also matters (Nichols & Berliner, 2008; Au, 2009; Madaus, 2009; Ravitch, 2010). Among the high school participants, the hierarchy is clear; according to the teachers in this study EOCT classes are affected more than the GHSGT classes and the U.S. History classes trumps all other subjects. This phenomenon did not occur in the middle school data because only one social studies subject was represented. The middle school teachers were more concerned with incorporating Math and English skills into their curriculum because of the stakes tied to these subjects, which is consistent with studies examined in the literature review (Goertz et al, 2001; VanFossen, 2005; Vogler, 2003; Von Zastrow et al, 2005).

Stakes for Whom

The hierarchy between the EOCT and GHSGT is interesting given that the stakes tied to the GHSGT are much higher, as the results determine whether a student receives a high school

diploma. Meanwhile, the EOCT is only 15 % of a student's grade, a student can fail the EOCT, and still pass the class. While they must take the test, they do not have to pass it. The EOCT would not be classified as a high stakes test for students, however for teachers the perception is that it has more stakes. One possible reason for this is teachers whose test scores are poor are often asked to teach another subject that does not have an EOCT. Another possible reason for this is teachers feel judged by the scores, because they are published in the newspapers and discussed at faculty meetings. Ms Violet explains as she discusses testing:

the students are not the ones being judged on the EOCT ... The graduation test most assuredly is high stakes for them but the EOCT they know it's not.

Michelle: So who's being judged by the EOCT?

Violet: that's me. It's me.

Most of the literature surrounding stakes discuss the stakes tied to students but this research suggests the stakes or perceived stakes tied to the teachers has a high impact on decision-making (Nichols & Berliner, 2008; Au, 2009). According to Madaus (2009) this perception of the test as being high stakes makes it a high stakes tests. As I discuss the curricular, assessment, and instructional choices, this phenomenon of teachers' stakes trumping students' stakes is important. Given there is only one tested subject and one test at the middle school, I will assume the CRCT is similar to the EOCT, because the stakes are tied directly to the teacher and throughout this study I will often equate the EOCT and CRCT, but without further data this is only an assumption. The stakes tied to the tests for teachers are impacting how the subjects tested by the GHSGT and EOCT are viewed.

Testable and Nontestable Subjects- Perceptions of the EOCT and GHSGT

Within the social studies classes at the high school level there is also an assumption that some subjects are tested and other are not. While in reality all subjects are tested by either the GHSGT or the EOCT, the interviews suggest there is a difference between the subjects that have an EOCT and those that are tested on the GHSGT. Ms. Plum explains how she benchmarks or gives exams:

...I don't benchmark for the nontested courses. I don't benchmark in the same way. I shouldn't say I don't benchmark at all. Our program incorporates project based learning and its odd that the two tested subjects get the least project based learning.

According to Violet, project based learning includes posters, brochures, essays, in general "other ways of assessing material, instead of a paper and pencil exam (Interview with Violet on 5/23/10)." When asked to explain the term nontested she included all subjects that do not have an EOCT: American Government, World History, World Geography, and Psychology. This idea of testable/non testable subjects occurred throughout the interviews at the high school level. Even in these nontested subjects the impact of the EOCT can still be felt. Ms. Yellow explains how she changed her instruction in World History because of the social studies department's emphasis on U.S. History.

I started to include information that is in the US History standards when I discussed World History events and giving more multiple choice exam questions to improve US History scores

Subject Hierarchy in EOCT Classes

At the top of the subject hierarchy is U.S. History, taught in the 10th grade. There are several reasons for this: 51 % of the content tested on the GHSGT is U.S. History and some of the American Government content tested on the GHSGT is introduced and discussed in U.S. History (www.doe.k12.ga.us). Then, U.S. History has an EOCT. Given the amount of testable material that deals with U.S. History on State Mandated Tests in Georgia, it is clear that the state places a high value on this content and this translates to the teachers. Several of the interview participants who had some experience teaching U.S. History acknowledged that the pressure is on those that teach U.S. History above other subjects, not only because it has the most testable information but because of the specificity of details required. Ms. Violet, Ms. Plum, and Mr. Gold all expressed how some of the facts in the standards were so specific that they bordered on trivia, making teaching U.S. History that much more difficult. As established earlier this pressure to achieve in U.S. History is affecting what is taught and how World History, a 9th grade class, is assessed. If U.S. History is the most important subject, then what comes next?

It makes sense that Economics, a senior class, would be the next in the hierarchy given it also has an EOCT and these classes seemed to have higher stakes for teachers. Economics and American Government teacher, Mr. Black, said “the EOCT in Economics affects my decisions more than the GHSGT does in American Government.” Mr. Gray, who had previous experience teaching Economics compares the demands of the EOCT in Economics versus the World History portion of the GHSGT. He said, “my entire economics course is geared to what is on that test. There is very little in my Econ course that is irrelevant to the EOCT.” However when he discussed the GHSGT he stated:

the graduation test number doesn't cover half of my course and doesn't occur until three years after they've had the class. I feel a great deal more freedom to interpret the curriculum, as I will. Yes, to interpret the curriculum, as I will. I'm not beholden to making sure that I have covered every specific thing of if I have gone cover to cover of the textbook...

Given the evidence I suggest that Economics is the second most important subject according to the teachers in this study because of the EOCT. According to these teachers, the EOCT classes have a bigger impact on instruction than GHSGT only classes.

Where do World History and American Government fit?

While both World History and American Government, an 11th grade class, are tested on the GHSGT, teachers feel in World History, they are less beholden to the test. Mr. Gray says "I feel a lot more freedom to pick and choose what I teach" in World History. When comparing teaching World History and U.S. History, Mr. Blue suggests, "I don't feel like I'm teaching as much to a test in the World History class and maybe that's because it's a test that they'll take two, three years away." World History teachers feel very little pressure to make decisions based on the GHSGT. This situation could be because the GHSGT is given in a student's junior year, three years after World History, or it could be because only 18% of the questions on the graduation test come from the World History Standards (www.doe.k12.ga.us). Another possible answer could be the stakes for teachers is very low. As I will discuss later, the GHSGT is impacting decisions but not with the same magnitude as in EOCT classes.

American Government classes are taught in a student's junior year, the same year the GHSGT is given. The timing of the American Government places it above World History and often times comparable to Economics. Mr. Red explains:

American Government in a normal semester I'm able to go in more depth in the government than I am in the economics. A normal semester defined to me would be a semester when I don't have to worry about cramming for the Georgia high school graduation test which is in March in the junior year...

American Government is above World History in the high school hierarchy because the success or failure of students can more easily be tied to the teachers. Teachers also alter their curriculum for Spring American Government classes because the GHS GT is given in the same semester. This subject hierarchy, reviewed in figure 5.1, impacts how the participants at the high school level responded to the interview questions and the surveys. This understanding of subject matter and the stakes for teachers runs throughout the rest of the data analysis.

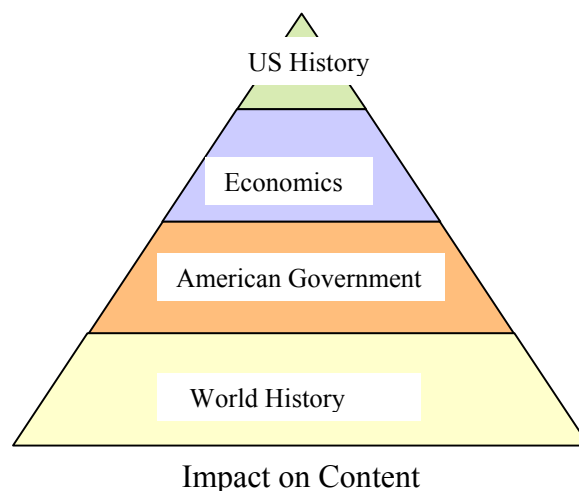


Figure 5.1 - Hierarchy

Impact on Content

When examining the impact of state mandated tests on curricular decisions, the biggest effect appears to be on the content teacher taught. Table 5.1, illustrates how teachers responded to

the statement, “the state mandated tests affect the content I teach.” Ninety- six percent of the teachers believes the SMT impacts content.

Table 5.1-Affect of State Mandated Test on Content

The state mandated tests affect the content I teach. N=26	
Strongly Agree	60 %
Agree	36 %
Undecided	0%
Disagree	0 %
Strongly Disagree	4 %

However, how the content is being affected is debatable. Most of the participants believe the content is being narrowed and limited. One participant suggests that the test and the GPS have actually expanded the amount of content that students get. There is also some conflict about whether the test defines the content or just provides the minimum requirements. Unfortunately, all the participants lament that the amount of content and the time given to cover the standards are inequitable.

Depth v. Breadth

The depth v. breadth conversation is an age-old discussion in social studies. According to the literature reviewed earlier, content is being narrowed and the evidence seems to support this situation (van Hover, et al., 2006; Onosko, 1991). Table 5.2, shows how participants responded to statements about how the SMT narrows the curriculum. Eight-five percent of the participants believe that the test narrows their ability to teach the content in social studies, with 15 % or only 4 participants undecided about if the test narrows their ability to cover material.

The interview data reveals similar results as Mr. Gray, a World History teacher explains:

I feel that when I was teaching the EOCT class that I had to constantly teach and reteach and hammer away at the key material--the key information at a

much more limited curriculum. Whereas in world history I can draw out the intricacies in the material much more for my students dive into topics much more deeply because I don't have to teach absolutely everything that appears in the standards. That allows me I think to give them more content over the course of the semester at a deeper level.

Many of the teachers in Northeast County are struggling with this same idea. Most of the teachers want to include more depth in their classes but feel the amount of content in a class, the breadth of the subject, is too overwhelming given the test. Teachers are often making the compromise between depth and breadth, rather begrudgingly. Mr. Gold, a U.S. History and American Government teacher, throughout his interview laments, "I think that the standardized testing runs counter to the fact that a teacher, a good teacher, connects the classroom content to the students' lives. It makes it harder to do that connecting." These two teachers suggest a lack of depth in the curriculum, a focus on facts instead of cause and effect or understanding. However one of the middle school participants had a very different opinion.

Table 5.2-State Mandated Tests Narrow the Curriculum

I feel the test narrows my ability to cover material in social studies. N=26	
Strongly Agree	42.3 %
Agree	42.3 %
Undecided	15.4 %
Disagree	0%
Strongly Disagree	0%

Ms. Green, a middle school teacher shares "for me I felt like the state mandated test helps broaden the curriculum." In her interview she relates how she used to only get to Reconstruction in a given year now, she is up to WWII. She explains how the test is more freeing because "I know what to expect and how much time I need to spend on certain topics." She suggests that

knowing what to expect allows her to pace out an appropriate amount of time for both depth and breadth. Despite these apparent advantages that she describes, later in her interview she explains how she does not have time to include “discovery type lessons.” This implies she is facing the same problems as the other participants and is narrowing the depth of coverage because of the CRCT. As teachers struggle with how much to teach, they often struggle with the limited amount of material and type of material that is on the tested on the CRCT and EOCT.

What’s on the test?

One of the problems with what’s on the test is the overemphasis on facts. Mr. Gold explains:

Gold: it appears to me looking at the GHSGT and comparing it to the EOCT, its more global more general. The GHSGT asks for generalized knowledge and actually requires some application and critical thinking

Michelle: And the implication there is the EOCT does not?

Gold: The EOCT I don’t think it does. I think it’s a memorization tool.

Mr. Gold’s remarks seem to be consistent with the quantitative data. Table 5.3 reveals that 80 % of the teachers believe that the SMT overemphasizes memorization, with the remaining 20 % choosing undecided. All those who chose undecided were teachers who only taught GHSGT classes.

Table 5.3-State Mandated Tests Overemphasize Memorization

The state mandated tests overemphasize memorization.		N=26
Strongly Agree		36 %
Agree		44 %
Undecided		20 %
Disagree		0 %
Strongly Disagree		0 %

Connected with this perception that the test overemphasizes memorization is a fear that the test does not measure what it is supposed to. Ms. Black, a middle school teacher, worries “the test doesn’t always line up” with the GPS. Ms. Violet, a U.S. History teacher, shares the same concerns; she recounts how Reggie Jackson was on a released EOCT but does not appear in the GPS. Teachers are not only concerned that the test doesn’t measure up but they are also worried that the test fails to measure what is really important, like the Mayflower Compact according to Mr. Gold and Alice Paul, according to Ms. Violet.

The teachers in this study seem immobilized by the amount of and specificity of the standards in US History. Ms. Violet seems paralyzed by the amount of content on the test. She explains “there are only 4 topics that I cover that are not on the test and I do them after the test has been administered.” Ms. Violet reiterates this number throughout the interview, even explaining which four things she includes and offers an explanation of why she includes these concepts. She suggests that because of the quantity and specificity it is difficult to include more information. Mr. Gold, explains how he had asked not to teach US History again because of the pressure he felt when teaching US History given the number of standards and specificity of the content (Interview with Mr. Gold, 5/25/10). However, Ms. Green explains, “the standards are really a minimum and there are things I can incorporate skills, as well as knowledge, that my students in social studies should know.” Her perspective is that the standards are the minimum requirement and teachers can include or not include other important information. While, most of the participants were not as frank about this situation, other data does corroborate this perception, that the standards are only a minimum, as teachers explain the differences between teaching to the test and teaching only the test.

Teaching to the Test

Many of the participants saw a difference between teaching *only* to the test and teaching to the test. Table 5.4 and Table 5.5, show that 69 % of teachers teach to the test but only 27 % percent say they teach only to the test. This was an unexpected difference, as I expected the results for the two questions to be rather consistent. So I asked teachers to elaborate on this situation, Ms. Plum says, “well you know I do teach to the test but I do more. I’m not limited by that and I don’t think that it benefits kids to be limited to what’s on the test.”

Table 5.4- Teaching to the Test

I teach to the state mandated test in social studies.	N= 26
Strongly Agree	27 %
Agree	42 %
Undecided	15 %
Disagree	12 %
Strongly Disagree	4 %

Table 5.4- Teaching *only* to the Test

I teach only what is on the state mandated test in social studies.	N=26
Strongly Agree	4 %
Agree	23 %
Undecided	27 %
Disagree	31 %
Strongly Disagree	15 %

Ms. Green explains “I don’t feel like I just teach what the standard says I feel like I do try to make it more accessible to my students helping them to relate to the information.” Across the board, regardless of their teaching context, teachers felt there is important material that needs to be included and are finding ways to include this information. However, the participants also explained that the barrier to including more information is the time available to ‘cover’ the testable material.

Enemy of Time

Teachers feel that the number of standards is too numerous to ‘cover’ all the required material before the test. Mr. Red says “to me its asinine that you’re asked to cover all of US history in 18 weeks. What is it then when you’re asked to cover all of world history?” Mr. Gray shares, “they are asking you to cover all of world history, I mean that’s an impossibility in itself.” Middle school teachers share the same concern about time, Ms. Black states, “I feel like there is a lot more information that has to be covered than the time we have to cover it.” These teachers regardless of the subject and test feel they have too much content to cover. As such, they also feel they have to move too quickly given the number time and number of standards.

Seventy-three percent of teachers believe that they must move too quickly in order to cover all required material in social studies. Most of the teachers also believe that we, as teachers, go too fast for students to be able to comprehend. Ms. Black explains, “we have to hurry through the material so fast that ... they don’t comprehend it.” All the interview participants expressed some disappointment about the amount of time they had to spend on certain subjects. Yet, the bigger concern is this speed is driving both teachers and students out of the curriculum. Mr. Gray explains:

[the test] it requires you to move too quickly especially applies in US history.

I’ve taught US history exactly one time and if I’m fortunate, I will never have to teach it again. I’m a history major I like US history it’s not my favorite thing but you know. I don’t enjoy teaching US history because of the pace I feel the curriculum forces you to move and I just don’t know how to teach it that quickly.

Ms. Plum suggests the speed and amount of material has “driven kids out our doors,” because US History has become less interesting and focuses only the facts.

Content that excludes the student

Throughout this research I have emphasized the role of the child in the content. Many of the participants lament that there is no time to allow students to connect with the content. Students are missing the opportunity to engage in the content. Teachers are unable to meet the “kid where they are” (Plum interview, 5/15). The amount of content, time, and pressure to make sure everything is covered makes it difficult to bridge the gap between the students’ world and the content. Mr. Red explains, because of the amount of content and time available for teaching, “there is little room to connect content to the real world.” While teachers are still making room for these concepts, they are frustrated that there is not more time to ensure knowledge is transferable to real world situations. Nor do teachers have the time to hook learners with material that they previously had time to do. Ms. Black says, “I don’t have time to do the fun stuff that hooks the learners into history.” She uses the example of the Lost Colony of Roanoke. She explained she used to do a discovery type lesson where students got to look at different resources and create an argument for what happened to the people, but she doesn’t have time to explore Roanoke anymore because it isn’t on the CRCT.

Content is directly being affected by the SMT. While admittedly there are positives to setting the content, such as increasing the amount of material taught, the majority of the participants felt the SMT narrows the content taught. The amount of standards and the time given to ‘cover’ material, make it almost impossible for teachers to increase depth and make connections with the students’ real world. Teachers are also upset by what they see as “valuable trivia,” trivial facts that are required to understand the intricacies of history and “nit picky facts” that are included on the EOCT/CRCT (Plum Interview, 5/20/10; Blue Interview, 5/13/10). While

teachers acknowledge, the test is a minimum requirement, time frustrates teachers, even though they are still finding ways to include important information.

Assessment

Assessment practice is at the core of the discourse surrounding the impact of SMT on curricular decision-making because assessment is what is used to judge both teachers and students. This study reveals that teachers are altering assessments to meet the demands of the test. As seen in Table 5.5, 84% of the teachers believe the SMT affects the assessment practices.

Table 5.5- State Mandated Tests affect on the Types of Classroom Assessments

The state mandated tests affect the types of assessments I give.		N=26
Strongly Agree		44%
Agree		40%
Undecided		12%
Disagree		0%
Strongly Disagree		4%

These changes fall into 3 categories. One, teachers are altering the format of classroom based assessments. Two, teachers are often using released test items or other test prep items on their own assessments instead of creating their own questions or using collaboration. Finally, teachers are changing the way they use or don't use test data within the confines of SMT. Teachers are using less test data to inform instruction because of the pressure to cover material and because little value is being placed on classroom assessments.

Altering the Format of Classroom Based Assessment

The teachers in this study all suggested that they were limiting the number of performance-based assessments (PBA) in their classes. Ms. Plum explains how “the two tested subjects get the least project based learning.” Teachers express a desire to do more but feel they can't, given the demands of the test. Ms. Green illuminates this problem:

The standards they want us to be doing project based performance based assessments and I'm still at the crossroads with this. I haven't fully reconciled it in my mind or in my instruction of how to effectively incorporate performance based assessments and effectively or efficiently get through the curriculum to prepare them for the test. Here's part of my dilemma, you have you tell us as teachers to create the performance based assessments and I do see tremendous value in that. ...But then on the flip side when its time for them to take the test in April they're going to have a multiple-choice test.

Many teachers in CRCT/EOCT classes found themselves giving more PBAs only after the EOCT. Most teachers felt compelled to give more standard/formal written assessments instead of PBAs, modeled on the multiple choice state mandated tests. Seventy-seven percent of participants acknowledge that the format of the tests affects instructional choices.

Ms. Black explains,

I tend to do more of the scantron, pick the answer, because so many of the kids are not used to using a scantron and so when they're given this bubble sheet for CRCT they tend to mess them up. So, I try to give them enough practice

There is a consistent move to more multiple choice questions, when asked "given state mandated tests in social studies, what types of test items do you include on major assessments?" all participants suggested they included multiple choice questions. Throughout the interviews, teachers shared their struggle with depending on multiple-choice tests especially in EOCT/CRCT classes. Mr. Blue says, "in US I tend to make it more multiple choices based just as practice for state mandated tests like the EOCT." World History and Government teachers saw some increase in multiple-choice questions but this was not as common. When more multiple-choice questions

were added in these subjects, they were included as a reaction to EOCT scores in U.S. History, not because of the GHSGT. Ms. Yellow explains how she includes “the types of questions she thinks they’ll find on standardized tests. So I have over the last few years changed my test to look more like an EOCT.” Ms. Plum talks about the dangers of depending only on multiple-choice questions, she explains:

There’s very little meat to the questions that enable kids to make connections.

A lot of the questions are stand alone do you know it or do you not. Not can you synthesize, not can you tell me why this applies to any given situation.

There is no performance-based piece. ...Multiple-choice only State mandated Tests are crippling to some kids.

Assessment format is mirroring that of SMT not only in multiple-choice format but in writing also. Teachers at every location explained that they included a written portion on their tests modeled after the writing portion of the CRCT and GHSGT. While this test is not specifically related to social studies it is also affecting the format of the tests. These writing portions promote higher order thinking and encourage students to transfer knowledge instead of recall.

Types of Test Items

Participants revealed in their interviews, as their assessment mirrored format, they also mimicked content. Many of the teachers are beginning to take more questions from released EOCT/CRCT/GHSGT, New York Regents Tests, USA Test Prep Items, and other test preparation materials instead of writing their own questions. Mr. Blue explains in U.S. History, “I borrow from old released New York Regions Test, which have a similar structure to the EOCT. And I’ve even pulled from the released EOCTs and EOCT practice manuals and things like that.” Ms. Green says:

I typically do not create own test questions I use the Georgia online assessment for any questions that they have that's what I try to incorporate. Cause I'm under the impression that the people who are creating the Georgia online assessment are also the same people who are creating the Georgia CRCT.

Mr. Red and Ms. Black, the two participants with the most experience, tended to rely on the old stand by of textbook generated tests instead of released test items. While, I am unsure of the exact reason for this phenomenon. Many teachers often fear if they write their own questions, they will be "too simple" (Ms. Violet interview, 5/23/10). When teachers write their own questions, they tend to write only the short answer and essay questions. In EOCT/CRCT classes there is a reliance on test preparation materials for the test items. In GHSGT teachers did not feel compelled to closely mirror the graduation test. Mr. Gray and Ms. Yellow, World History teachers, rarely if ever used released GHSGT items on their own assessments. Even the American Government teachers did not feel the need to include released GHSGT items on their own assessment. In World History and American Government, teachers wrote more of their own questions, took them from textbook test banks, or from tests collected throughout their career. Just as the type of questions on classroom-based assessments are changing so is the way the data is being used.

Use of Test Data

The classroom based assessment experts reviewed in chapter two, suggest that data from the test should be used to inform instruction (Stiggins, 2008; White, 2008; O'Connor, 2008). However there are mixed results from this study on whether this is really happening. World History teacher, Ms. Yellow talked about how she was able to use test data to inform instruction. Ms. Black, a GA Studies teacher, explains, "there is simply no time to go back if the students

don't get the material.” Unlike, the other GA Studies teacher, Ms. Green relishes in analyzing data from classroom based assessments saying “ I look forward to tests, so I can determine where to go next.” While Economics teacher, Mr. Red suggests there is no point in classroom-based assessment because “all we are doing is teaching students to take a state mandated test, not teaching... we are in the business of education not learning.” The quantitative data in Table 5.6 illustrates this diversity as well with fifty-eight percent of the teachers believing that there is an overemphasis on preparing for the test in social studies with 42 % suggesting we do not overemphasize test preparation. Those teachers, who believe we are overemphasizing test preparation, feel there is little or no value placed on classroom-based assessment because of the emphasis placed on SMT scores.

Table 5.6- Overemphasis of Test Preparation in Social Studies

Teachers feel there is an overemphasis on preparing for the test in social studies.		N=26
Strongly Agree		58%
Agree		0%
Undecided		0%
Disagree		39%
Strongly Disagree		3 %

Assessment practices are changing because of the SMT. EOCT classes are altering their practices more than in other subjects, as these teachers feel the need to model their assessment practices on the test. The World History and American Government teachers' assessment practices are changing the least. I also found assessment practices are changing because of the writing portion of the CRCT and GHSGT. When teachers assign writing prompts in class and for homework, they are closely aligned to the type of questions that might appear on a state mandated assessment. The frequency of these writing assignments is also tied to whether a

writing portion is involved in any given subject. Teachers are changing the types of tests they are giving, the content on the tests and the format of the test.

Instructional Practices

Ninety-two percent of the teachers from the survey believe that the SMT affects instructional choices. The interviews and surveys reveal that teachers are changing the way they present information to students, decreasing critical thinking lessons, and focusing on test taking strategies. As established earlier, EOCT classes are the most affected courses, but the majority of the teachers have made some changes to their instructional practices.

The survey asked a series of questions, with the goal of understanding specific instructional methods that teachers use as a result of the test. Teachers were asked if they used more worksheets, lecture, small group, and large groups as a result of the test. As seen in Tables 5.7-5.10, the quantitative data did not offer consistent data. The problem with interpreting this data is worksheets, small groups, and large group instruction could be described in a variety of different ways depending on the teacher, without further questioning this data offered no clear connection between the test and the instructional practices.

Table 5.7- Use of Worksheets in Social Studies because of the Test

I use more worksheets in social studies because of the test.	N=26
Strongly Agree	0 %
Agree	15 %
Undecided	34 %
Disagree	12 %
Strongly Disagree	39 %

Table 5.8 – Use of Lecture in Social Studies because of the Test

I use more lectures in social studies because of the test.	N=26
Strongly Agree	8 %
Agree	39 %
Undecided	23 %
Disagree	22 %
Strongly Disagree	8 %

Table 5.9- Use of Small Groups in Social Studies because of the Test

I use more small group activities in social studies because of the test.	N=26
Strongly Agree	0 %
Agree	27 %
Undecided	23 %
Disagree	31 %
Strongly Disagree	19 %

Table 5.10 Use of Large Groups in Social Studies because of the Test

I use more large group activities in social studies because of the test.	N=26
Strongly Agree	0 %
Agree	34 %
Undecided	35 %
Disagree	20 %
Strongly Disagree	11 %

However, the interviews reveal three major changes. One, teachers are lecturing more often and decreasing critical thinking lessons and two, teachers are including more test taking skills.

Finally, as established earlier, in the section titled, Content that excludes the Student, teachers are also giving students less opportunity to choose how information is delivered.

More Lecturing, Less Critical Thinking

Participants expressed frustration that they had to tell students specific bits of information instead of allowing them to explore information on their own. Ms. Violet was perhaps the most discouraged as she explains, “lecture is the only way I can make sure they get the right information.” She shared how she had tried questions and small group discussion but the students did not get the right information. For example after a small group discussion “one of the questions was: Was Bill Clinton convicted in his impeachment? What happened? And the kid just wrote yes” (Violet Interview, 5/23/10). She worried if she did this type of lesson often; she was “setting her students up for failure.” Mr. Red worries that he has to be more specific in how he teaches, eliminating his ability to “tell a story, to be a historian and to teach his students to be

historians.” Mr. Gold, shares the same concerns explaining that in his U.S. History classes, he has eliminated activities that require students “to take a stand on an issue.” At the middle school level this is also true, as Ms. Green explained earlier her reluctance to include “discovery lessons.” Teachers want to make sure that students are ready for the test, and their perception is lecturing will help them do better.

Teaching Test Preparation

To prepare students teachers are also teaching overt testing practices. Table 5.11, shows 81 % of teachers are using overt teaching practices to help students get ready for the test.

Table 5.11-Use of Overt Practices to help Prepare for the SMT

I use overt teaching practices, such as test taking skills and writing rubrics to help prepare my students for the state mandated test.	N=26
Strongly Agree	65 %
Agree	15 %
Undecided	12 %
Disagree	8 %
Strongly Disagree	0 %

Ms. Black suggests, “ I use the Coach books every week, so students can practice eliminating detractors from multiple choice questions.” Coach books are test preparation books that define the content in several pages and offer sample test items to help students practice for the state mandated tests. In American Government, Mr. Gold said, “I use the graduation test prep books at least once a week, to build vocabulary, to make sure students are prepared for the type of questions on the test.” Mr. Blue explains how all U.S. History teachers at Benjamin Harrison, “use the same midterm based on released EOCT questions to make sure they are prepared for the type of questions on the test.” Teachers are teaching these overt practices in hopes that when they take the test they will do better.

Limiting Choice

On a free response question on the survey, teachers were asked to discuss, how their instructional choices would be different if you did not have a state mandated test in social studies? Teachers' answers varied and portray how much choices are affected by the test. Teachers feel they can't make information personal for students or teachers. Several participants suggested they would include more group work, projects and activities that required students to research and write about material. When I asked the interview participants to elaborate on this question they suggest they really want to do more project work but can't because of the test. Ms. Violet states, I would "construct something meaningful, do actual projects." Ms. Green explains I would do activities where "students are presented selected facts or examples and have to process the information to reach the conclusion...my lessons would be more rigorous." Ms. Plum shares:

I would certainly spend more time with project-based learning and allow for greater student choice. ...I would be more concerned with facilitating the ability to make broader thematic generalizations and locate supporting details and transferable problem solving skills.

The teachers suggest that if there were no test, they would allow students to do more and participate in their own learning.

Instructional choices are becoming more teacher-centered, as teachers lecture more and give students fewer opportunities to engage in learning. The teachers in this study believe that lecturing is the only way to ensure students are getting the right information. They are also fearful that if they increase critical thinking then, they will jeopardize students' success on the test.

Before moving on to the teachers as gatekeepers, I want to review research question #1. The evidence suggests that content, assessment, and instructional choices are being affected by the SMT. So far, I have also alluded to how these choices impact the role of the teacher.

Teachers As Gatekeepers

During the interviews, I asked all the participants to respond to a series of quotes related to gatekeeping and high stakes testing, found in Figure 5.2. The first quote defined Thornton's concept of gatekeeping, while the other quotes are the basic principles of the gatekeeping framework established in chapter one. As teachers responded to these quotes, some interesting themes emerged. All nine teachers believe in the basic principles of gatekeeping, as illustrated by their responses to the quotes. However, as these participants responded they explained this is how it should be, but they are unsure if gatekeeping is occurring or even possible under the demands of SMT.

Quotes
1. "gatekeeping encompasses the decisions teachers make about curriculum and instruction and the criteria they use to make those decisions"--Thornton
2. "curriculum planning is a continuous process that, as materials and procedures are developed, they are tried out, their results appraised, their inadequacies identified, suggested improvements indicated; there is preplanning, redevelopment and then reappraisal; and in this kind of continuing cycle, it is possible, for the curriculum and instructional program, to be continuously improved over the years" ----Tyler
3. "high stakes tests ... reshape student-teacher relationships and define what an educated person should know, understand, and be able to do, and what should be taught and learned"---Madaus, et al.
4. "classrooms are where teachers make choices at the intersection of boundaries, expectations, and challenges."--Webeck et al.

Figure 5.2- Quotes

While responding to the Tyler quote, Ms. Yellow expressed some frustration explaining:

I mean if you have students that are struggling with standardized tests and you see the same trend over and over again where it's the what we call the

bubble students here, you know the certain groups of minority students the socio economically disadvantaged students if they're still continuing to be the ones at the same counties over and over again that aren't meeting the standards that are set out by these standardized tests ...Shouldn't we be looking at the test, instead of looking at the curriculum and instruction over and over again to figure out how to best teach to the test, could we look at how to make a better test?

Her remarks suggest that we can't be true gatekeepers if we are unable to meet the needs of our students. While responding to the Webeck, et al quote she explains, "we're not the ones that are necessarily choosing what those boundaries are to start with you know. And we don't necessarily get to choose what the expectations are," so teachers' choices are being limited. Ms. Yellow represents the opinions of the majority of the participants; all believing that gatekeeping is important but worry that it faces some obstacles. The participants used words like "restrained," "hindered," and "restricted" to explain why they can't engage in gatekeeping practices. Given the qualitative data, teachers want to be given more power to make decisions, especially in regards to content, but can't given the test. Mr. Gray says, "gatekeeping seems to be more choice of what I'm teaching in the content that is being presented. So I would say that in an EOCT class the curriculum planning is constrained." It is interesting that the two teachers who do not have an EOCT are still cognizant of the barriers of the tests. Teachers want to be gatekeepers but the evidence suggests they are not, so what are they?

Teachers are...

Three models of teaching arose from the interviews, all three analogies have commonalities and boil down to the level of choice teachers have in making decisions. The

analogies are facilitator of facts, foreman or manager, and gate opener, with gate opener being the most common among the participants.

Facilitator of Facts

Mr. Red subscribes to the facilitator of facts model, he explains instead of “being a leader in an exploration of education you’re now a facilitator of you better know this fact.” The facilitator of facts’ main job is to show students a list of important things, without explanation or discussion. This analogy is similar to a TV News personality, who reports the news to people without any interaction with the audience. As a facilitator of facts, important decisions have already been made and the job of the teacher is simply the distribution of these facts. Mr. Red suggests that teachers are simply “skill based people not an artist.” The SMT, especially in EOCT classes, promote trivial bits of information, which is based on the old transmission model of education. As a facilitator of facts there is no room for cause/effect discussions. Under this model teachers are told what to do. Ms. Black summarizes this situation as she explains, “I think through the GPS it basically outlines how and what they want us to do. Especially when they give, you page numbers and activities and resources that the state is trying to say this is the way we want you to do it.” Ms. Black suggests that not only is the test promoting a transmission model to the students but also to the teachers, as they are told what needs to be covered and when it should be discussed. However, according to the Georgia Department of Education, the goal of the GPS is to promote more conceptual learning especially with its enduring understandings that the standards are suppose illuminate (www.doe.ga.us). “An enduring understanding is an inference that requires inquiry and student-centered construction if it is to be understood”(www.doe.ga.us). While this should be occurring Ms. Black and Mr. Red, the two participants with the most teaching experience feel unable to accomplish this goal given the

demands of the test. While both these teachers desperately want to promote inquiry, they feel compelled to focus only on the testable lists because they believe that is the expectation of the test.

Foreman/Manager Model

Mr. Gold explains the foreman/manager role, “I see it more like being a foreman, straw boss, manager... so I am not the designer of the project who has made these decisions, and I am just the person who’s following the rules.” This analogy like the one above negates the power of the teacher to make key decisions for the students, much like the facilitator of facts model. The foreman analogy assumes an architect or project manager has already made all the decisions and the job of the foreman is to disseminate information and ensure things are getting done. In this model the job of the teacher is to give students facts and make sure students learn the required information and this is where this model differs from the above. As a Foreman/Manager, you are accountable for the behaviors and actions of the students. This becomes a problem because teachers can’t make students learn, any more than a foreman can force people to work. A foreman can tell a person to do something, have them make corrections and if they do not meet the challenge, the worker can be fired. A teacher can’t do this, instead they continue to teach and guide but students have little accountability in EOCT/CRCT classes where the pressure is highest on the teacher. Under this model, the foreman is ultimately responsible for the success or failure of a project and in the case of school this is the success or failure of the students on the test. As foreman/managers, teachers’ jobs are at risk because the students’ do not succeed. As a facilitator of facts decisions are made but they are not ultimately accountable for the success or failure of the students. As some of the teachers subscribe to the Foreman/Manager Model, it is changing teachers’ behaviors in the classrooms, because it assumes teachers have no power and

are accountable for the actions of students. However, the majority of the teachers were uncomfortable with this analogy because they felt this model not only relinquished too much power, but also placed too much responsibility on the teachers for the behaviors and actions of their students.

The Gate Opener

Ms. Plum suggests the term “gate opener,” where the “test is the gatekeeper” but the teachers are still in control of important decisions. Mr. Blue explains:

To me it’s the idea that you have a flood of information, a flood of content and you as a teacher get to decide which ones are the most important, which ones you think will help your students best on what’s been asked of them. And you let them through in a way that is best benefits your teaching philosophy...

Ultimately, teachers decide the way the information will come across given their personality, situation, belief system, but as explained by many of the participants, their choices have become limited. They must decide especially in regards to content, what is emphasized and what is not within the confines of the test. The gate opener model suggests that teachers are still in control of some things, but there is someone or something else ultimately in control. This gate opener model is similar to the ideas found in Cuban’s (2009) *Hugging the Middle*. Six of the nine participants seem to fit into this category. While, Ms. Plum is the only one who uses this term, the other participants expressed the same ideas about limited choices within a given framework. Mr. Blue explains

To me it’s the idea that you have a flood of information, a flood of content and you as a teacher get to decide which ones are the most important, which ones you

think will help your students best on what's been asked of them. And you let them through in a way through the gate that is in a way the best benefits your teaching philosophy.

Michelle: Do state mandated tests affect your ability to be a gatekeeper?

Blue: I mean you still have those choices and you still get to control the information. You just may alter what you let through the gate and how you let it through.

While this model is the most appealing to teachers it still has some major problems. For example, it supposes that decision making of teachers is limited, which takes power away from teachers. It does imply that teachers are more than facilitators of facts but, how many decisions are teachers really able to make under this model. This model implies that the gatekeeping power of teacher is in jeopardy because the teacher is only able to open the gate not control it. However if teachers are gate openers, instead of gatekeepers, there is a new question, who keeps the gate?

Who keeps the gate?

This question is a major problem when discussing gatekeeping because it is the “ubiquitous they” who establish the framework for teachers (Gray Interview, 5/4/10). Who ‘they’ are, is a little unclear to the participants, some of the teachers suggested the “department of education,” others say “policymakers,” some suggested “other teachers,” and others suggest a combination of these people, but again the teachers are unsure. The decision to make standards and state mandated tests resides with the policy makers, who are influenced by the national policy of NCLB. The standards were set by the department of education with the help of teachers, content experts, assessment experts, colleges of education, and stake holders

(www.doe.ga.us). So, if ‘they’ are keeping the curriculum, their own priorities and agendas are tied up in the test and as revealed in the literature review these different agendas often conflict (Anderson, 1992; Snyder et al, 1998). Test makers and textbook publishers want consistency in content so that they can make money (Anderson, 1992). Policy makers want evidence that teachers are doing their job (Anderson, 1992). While teachers want to educate the students in their rooms. Teachers are cognizant of the demands of some of these groups and are responding. Teachers are reacting to the perceived demands of policy makers who want proof students are learning and feel compelled to teach more. Campbell’s Law, which states, “the more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision-making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressure and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it was invented to monitor” is clearly represented in the data as standards and tests are established, teachers feel they must teach to the test (Campbell, 1975; Nichols & Berliner, 2008, p. 26-27). As they are teaching to the test, teachers feel the need to tell students more information to ensure the right facts are transmitted, instead of constructing knowledge. This change is interesting given the way teachers feel about the test.

Teachers’ Beliefs about the Test

Teachers’ opinions about the tests range from very negative to undecided, so it seems surprising that teachers are making any kind of change given these perceptions. However the teachers in this study also believe the test is a judgment on the teacher not the students. This creates a complex paradigm. Table 5.12 provides an overview of what teachers believe about the tests. Seventy- three percent of teachers do not believe the test results reflects what students know. Teachers are unsure if the SMT improves instruction or improves teachers’ ability to teach or cover material. While, forty-four percent of teachers believe the test improves instruction.

There are other teachers who are undecided and believe instruction has not improved. These statistics are similar for the other two items in Table 5.12.

Table 5.12

	SMT improves instruction N=26	SMT improves teachers ability to teach N=26	SMT improves teachers' ability to cover material N=26	SMT reflects what students know N=26
Strongly Agree	4 %	4 %	0 %	0 %
Agree	40 %	4 %	4 %	4 %
Undecided	24 %	40 %	35 %	23 %
Disagree	0 %	36 %	35 %	50 %
Strongly Disagree	32%	16 %	26 %	23 %

Given these numbers, why are teachers continuing to push facts onto the students for the sake of the test? This was surprising, as I presumed that if teachers thought the test did not reflect what students knew, nor had positive view of the test, then they would not succumb to the need to focus on the facts that are tested on the test. The answer seemed to be tied to the belief that the test is a judgment of the teachers' ability and their own worth as a teacher, especially in EOCT classes. Mr. Blue, Ms. Violet, Mr. Gold, and Mr. Red all lament that the test evaluates the teacher. As teachers feel judged they change their practices and possibly their relationship with students.

The interviews provide more information about this criterion, as they were asked to respond to the Madaus (2007) quote about the role of high stakes tests on student teacher relationships. Most of the participants agreed with the quote, suggesting the test was “reshaping student- teacher relationships” (Madaus, 2007, p.100). While two of the participants did not believe the test impacted these relationships and one was undecided Ms. Plum explains why teachers feel the test is changing relationships:

[high stakes tests]reinforces that I'm the authority and puts a student in the position

to be a receptacle. And that's amplifying it. That's really over simplifying it. But I think, it does reinforce that us and them, there is no team, no facilitation. I shouldn't say no, cause I think there are ways to make that happen.

This authority relationship promotes an idea that the teacher is responsible for a student's success/ failure. Students have no buy in and the teachers are the only responsible party. Ms. Green, one of the participants who does not believe the test affects relationships, says "I would not let that [high stakes tests] interfere with my relationship with my students." Mr. Gray expressed that he was unsure if the test had any impact on student-teacher relationships. It is very difficult to explain what is really happening, without observations, because it is tied to teachers' perceptions and understanding of the test

This idea that the test reshapes the student teacher relationship is a perplexing phenomenon because all the interview participants shared that they wanted what was best for their students and their personal beliefs influenced their decision-making. Fifty-eight percent of the teachers suggested that their personal beliefs affected instructional choices. Seven of the nine interview participants said their personal beliefs were important when making instructional choices. The other two participants were undecided. Teachers say their personal beliefs are affecting their decisions but both the survey data and their reactions to the quotes suggest the test is altering many of the teachers' processes. This data has two possible interpretations. One, they are making decisions that they would not otherwise make if it were not for the test. Two, teachers are using both the test and their personal beliefs to make decisions. If this the case, then it becomes a matter of how teachers balance their personal beliefs and the test.

Why are teachers changing their beliefs?

One reason teachers are changing their beliefs is because of the pressure teachers feel to cover material especially in EOCT classes. Eighty-nine percent of teachers felt pressure to cover material for the sake of the test. This pressure is causing more stress; with 100% of the participants suggesting the SMT has increased their stress level. This pressure is extremely intense in EOCT classes, as teachers feel the scores judge their ability to teach. This seems to be pushing teachers to make decisions that they may not normally make for the sake of test scores. Teachers are trying to teach harder but this is also problematic because they are falling into the “I taught it, but they didn’t learn it” phenomenon (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005, p. 228). This phenomenon focuses on coverage of material by the teacher, not necessarily the learning and understanding of a student. In EOCT classes, teachers feel their worth is tied to their test scores. GHSGT teachers feel less restrained and their decision-making is not being altered as much, because they do not feel as judged by their students test scores. At the middle school level, a school’s history with high stakes testing seems to affect the teachers’ attitudes towards the test. Ms. Green from Martin Van Buren, who has a history of success on SMT and does not feel the test has that much of an impact. This suggests that the success on SMT impacts the perceptions of the test, implying that teachers who have students who succeed on the test do not believe the test has that much of an impact. This could be due to several factors, the preparation of the students themselves, the kind of teaching the teacher is using or some unnamed and unexplored factor, I will elaborate on this ideal in more detail in Chapter 6. However, Ms. Black feels confined by the test, she says “I just got my scores back and I am not happy...I can’t make many choices because of the test.” The pressure teachers feel to cover material combined with the perception that the test is a judgment of teacher success is altering the gatekeeping role. As

scores continue to be published in the newspaper and at the high school level used to classify the school's AYP status, teachers feel judged by the scores. Faculty meetings are used to discuss what subject areas succeed and fail and what teachers have successful scores. These situations encourage or push teachers to do things differently so that they will not be ostracized and /or criticized.

Conclusions

Throughout this chapter evidence has been presented that suggest SMT are affecting curricular decisions. Content is being limited, assessment is mirroring SMT, and teachers are limiting student involvement because the right material has to be shared. Teachers in this study are changing their instructional choices because of the SMT, possibly jeopardizing professional integrity because they are making decisions they would not typically make. Classroom assessment practices seem to be undermined by the tests, as the state mandated tests is the only one that appears to have value. There is a hierarchy of subjects being created that encourages more changes depending on the perceived stakes of the test. Teachers' gatekeeping role is changing, as he/she feels judged by the test and are under an extreme amount of pressure and stress because of the test. Many of their decisions run contrary to teachers' beliefs and the best interests of the child. So what does this all mean? In the next chapter, I will discuss the implications of this evidence.

Chapter 6- Conclusions and Implications

Before beginning chapter six, I want to review some of the basic parts of the research study. In chapter one, I laid out the theoretical framework based on Thornton's idea of gatekeeping, explaining that while the term is relatively new it is grounded in the works of Dewey (1997, 2010, 2008), Tyler (1949), Snyder (1992), Reeves (2007), Madaus (1992, 2007), Popham (2001), and Anderson (2003). I also explain that gatekeeping is important to this study because teachers need to understand the impact state mandated testing has on their choices so that they can better navigate the current educational environment. In chapter two, I explain how there is a lot of research about high stakes testing in a variety of different fields but there is little research on the impact of state mandated testing in Georgia. In chapter three, I describe the importance of the survey in providing a broad overview of teachers in Northeast County. I also point out how the multiple case study approach enriches the data with specific details from nine teachers. In chapter four, I provide the context for the research, providing details about the teachers and schools where the interviews took place. I explain how by examining each participant and location individually and as a whole a better understanding of the data can be achieved. In chapter five, I examine the relationship between the SMT and teacher decision-making, exploring how teachers' perceive their power to make decisions. I suggest that teachers' perception that the tests is judging their worth as a teacher leads them to make decisions that they would not otherwise make.

In this final chapter, I discuss what all of this means in regards to the basic tenets of the gatekeeping theoretical framework, limitations of the study given the confines of this small research study, and implications of the research.

Perils of Gatekeeping Given the Test

In this section, I will examine what my research reveals about some of the perils of the theoretical framework, given the state mandated tests. One major part of gatekeeping is the role of the test in getting teachers to comply, so I will discuss how my research reveals that the SMT are acting as a tool of bureaucracy. A second principle of gatekeeping is based on the ability of teachers to balance the demands of the test with personal ideas and beliefs, therefore I will examine how teachers in this study are *hugging the middle*, as Cuban (2009) suggests. I also suggest in chapter one that gatekeeping is an important element of professional integrity, so I will illustrate how the professional integrity of teachers in this study is being affected. Assessment practices are another key part of gatekeeping, so I will explain what the research in this study reveals about assessment *for* learning. Then, I will disclose what my research says about the disconnect between the intended results of SMT and what is really occurring. Finally, I will discuss what this research study reveals about the ability of teachers to fulfill their gatekeeping role.

A tool of bureaucracy

According to this study, the tests are acting as a tool of bureaucracy however; this relationship is not as simple as it may first appear. The high stakes tests are controlling teachers as Madaus and Kellegan (1992) suggest, because teachers are limiting some content, certain activities and changing practices. The study reveals teachers are sticking to the GPS that govern the tests, especially in EOCT/CRCT classes, which promote certain political beliefs and agendas

(Massell, 1994). As teachers leave out Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, and W.E.B. Dubois but emphasize Martin Luther King, Jr. and Booker T. Washington, they are promoting a certain ideology that can be linked to an agenda. This ideology promotes a view of citizenship where people should not question the status quo in a 'radical' manner. Booker T. Washington and Martin Luther King, Jr. are often glorified as the way people should be. However this in turn implies that the 'radical' reactions of WEB Dubois and Malcolm X are wrong. This suggests a form of democracy where the minority voices are eliminated, which goes against the fundamentals of the Constitution, creating a more compliant society. However, some of these teachers are also finding ways to incorporate material that is not in the standards that they deem important. Both Mr. Gold and Ms. Violet suggest topics that they feel very passionately about and continue to include them in their classes. Although teachers are finding ways to manipulate the system and include additional information, this does not negate teachers' beliefs that the test is defining some choices. Many teachers feel they cannot guide students in authentic educational experiences because of the demands placed on them by the test. Even though teachers are finding ways to navigate the system they still feel controlled.

Participants feel as if they have to change practices to meet the demands of the test or be branded with low-test scores, which equals bad teaching. To avoid this situation, some teachers are choosing not to teach U.S. History and Economics. Mr. Gold expressed how he had decided not to teach US History any more if possible (Interview with Mr. Gold, 5/26/2010). Or, good teachers who do not have good tests scores are being asked to teach 'nontestable' subjects. Two of the participants on their surveys revealed in the free response section how they had been asked to teach another class, after two consecutive years of bad test scores. Test scores or the fear of bad test scores is dictating who teaches certain subjects. I am still not sure what this means in a

larger context, I wonder if the teachers who are staying put in EOCT classes are chosen because they are good teachers or if they are chosen because they conform to the bureaucratic rules? I hope it is the former but I worry that it is the latter given the dependence on test scores.

The test seems to be promoting a culture where test scores are more important than learning. This culture advocates certain attitudes and beliefs that in turn control the decisions that are being made in classrooms. The stakes meant to encourage student success and help teachers teach better has become debilitating. Teachers are more concerned with improving test scores rather than improving instruction. Ravitch (2010), an early advocate of the accountability associated with NCLB suggests, education is being lost and has been replaced by an “obedience of fear” which encourages teachers to make decisions based on test score instead of what is in the best interest of the child (p.21).

State mandated tests are a bureaucratic tool because they limit the material discussed in classes, they are being used to determine who teaches certain subjects, and most disturbing they promote a culture where the test scores of their students define teachers. The test score label makes teachers feel like they need to make changes for the sake of the test. While the test is not controlling every decision or forcing behaviors it is setting boundaries that teachers must operate within.

Hugging the Middle

Cuban (2008) suggests most teachers in the accountability era are ‘hugging the middle.’ This describes the teachers in NE county as they walk a fine line between teaching to the test and teaching everything on the test. Teachers are including more multiple choice type tests and limiting the number of performance based assessments, however the PBA is not being completely eliminated. After the EOCT, for three weeks, teachers are engaging in meaningful

educational activities and guiding students in project based assignments that allow some freedom for students. However, this is the time students are exhausted and least attentive. This trend is disturbing and seems to illustrate the power of the test, as teachers revert to authentic learning after the test when students are least likely to engage in the activities.

Teachers are also lecturing more in EOCT classes to get the right information across, however in GHSGT classes, teachers are exploring more details and practicing critical thinking. Yet, critical thinking activities are still being used in EOCT classes, if the teacher feels passionate about the activity. Mr. Gold is dedicated to examining and discussing the Mayflower Compact regardless of the standards, because he feels it is a fundamental part of citizenship education. Teachers realize that “not everything that matters can be quantified” (Ravitch, 2010, p.226). Yet Mr. Gold also laments how he has no time to do activities that require students to take a stand. In NE County, teachers are searching for a happy medium between test worship and personal beliefs. As teachers make decisions to limit their personal freedom they often feel frustrated and limited by the cycle of assessment—reward—punishment that governs them.

The ‘hugging the middle’ concept is also illustrated in the gate opener analogy, where teachers have the power to make decisions within the framework of the test. They do have choices; they can create meaningful educational experiences, but the pressure to cover material before the test, limits them. Some teachers are better equipped than others in balancing what they want to do with the content demands of the test, especially in classes without an EOCT. While important activities and content is being included, teachers are constantly struggling with how much they are willing to compromise for the sake of the test. They are ‘hugging the middle’ but I worry that the pressure and stress is pushing them outside the middle and towards teaching only to the test.

The area teachers are compromising the most is where students are involved. The literature review provided earlier, documents how important the role of the student is in curriculum (Thornton, 2001; Marzano; 2007; Davies, 2007). Yet the biggest complaint of teachers in NE was they can't meet students where they are because of the test. They can't let students guide the curriculum. Teachers are significantly decreasing the role of the student, because they are afraid of what the test scores might reveal. While these types of activities have not been eliminated it is an alarming trend. This limits students' ability to "seek alternative explanations, to raise questions to pursue knowledge on their own to think differently" (Ravitch, 2010). The danger of this phenomenon is students are getting better at taking multiple choice tests but do not have the ability to transfer knowledge because their teachers are so focused on ensuring the students know the right answers for tests. While teachers are currently 'hugging the middle,' balancing testing demands with personal values, they appear to be conforming to the test more and more, compromising personal beliefs, shifting the balance of power.

Is Professional Integrity Intact?

The answer to this question is not a clear yes or no, it depends, better defines the situation. Professional integrity suggests teachers are following sound ethical principles as they compromise what they think is best for a child and replaced it with what is best for the test. However, the evidence is mixed on whether this is really occurring.

One group of teachers feel they are doing things that run contrary to good educational practices. Teachers are instructing students to memorize information absent of context, making no connections among the facts. I would consider this an unethical practice, which jeopardizes teacher professionalism because teachers are not using sound educational practices. Ravitch (2010) suggests teacher professionalism is an "antiquated notion" in the era of NCLB (p.218).

The study reflects how some teachers are falling into this trap. This scenario is more prevalent in EOCT classes where the drive to cover content is the highest.

A second group of teachers are attempting to balance the test and personal beliefs; these teachers are trying to stand their ground. They are attempting to merge their values about education and test demands. These teachers that are trying to merge values and the test are the most frustrated and stressed because they are working to integrate information and activities that they deem important into the curriculum driven by the test. They are in a constant battle between what they believe about education and the compromises they feel forced to make. These teachers often do things that they would not otherwise do if there were no test, but they are not willing to do this everyday. They are desperately trying to locate some middle ground, as this group struggles with their choices on a daily basis. These teachers make compromises, but they try to remain true to their personal values as much as possible.

The final group of teachers are frustrated and stressed like the other two groups however they have decided to either stop teaching classes where they feel their ethics are being compromised or ignore the school norms. This group believes that professional integrity means doing what they feel is right regardless. These teachers are in the minority as very few teachers have decided to take this road. Teachers that could easily fall into this category do not because they believe part of being a professional is adhering to demands of the job. Many teachers do not identify with this group because they can't resolve the conflict between integrity and professionalism.

As more compromises are made, professional integrity wavers. The culture of high stakes testing is so overwhelming and stifling at times, I am unsure if teachers understand how much they have bought into the demands of testing. I know in my own practice, I did not realize how

many compromises I had made, until I listened to others talk about how they were meeting the demands of the test. The problem with these compromises is one leads to another, and before you know it, a series of changes have been made that add up to something major.

Are we indoctrinating students?

As teacher integrity is being compromised and teachers continue to conform to meet the demands of the test, what does this mean for the curriculum and students? Dewey (1936) suggests when there is a prescribed curriculum it becomes a form of indoctrination. Is the reliance on a fact driven curriculum, one that can be tested becoming a form of indoctrination? Teachers in this study, expressed concern over what was included in the test, especially Mr. Gold and Ms. Violet who shared their frustration that they have to teach things like Samuel Gompers and Irving Berlin, but have to find time to teach the Mayflower Compact and Alice Paul (Interview with Mr. Gold 5/26/10; Interview with Ms. Violet, 5/15/20). Given the curriculum leaves out controversial figures, such as Alice Paul, does this not promote a certain belief system that glorifies heroes and minimizes controversy? Consider these facts, the basic knowledge that everyone gets in GA is theoretically the same, the test is a politically driven curriculum, and the test only assesses knowledge that is quantifiable.

Missing from the curriculum is instruction about citizenship and democracy, important tenets of social studies because they are not easily tested (Ravitch, 2010; Madaus, 2009). Part of the reason why these ideas are not easily tested is because the terms themselves are ambiguous, meaning different things to different people and groups. Even using the NCSS definitions and conceptual understandings, the terms are still difficult to assess. For example, NCSS suggests part of being an effective citizen is participating in civic and community life and being aware of issues that impact the nation (NCSS, 2001) how can this idea be assessed on a state mandated

test? Democracy is explained as a place where the actions of each person make a difference (NCSS, 2001), how can this be measured and whose value system will be used to determine the correct answer. The state mandated test promotes certain ideas that often glorify America and tend to minimize voices that question society, for example when discussing women's rights the inclusion of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, major leader of the Seneca Fall Convention with no mention of Margaret Sanger, an American Birth Control Activist. The perception of democracy and citizenship being portrayed is memorizing the fact, don't question why these facts are important, and learn how to take a multiple-choice test. However in AP curriculums, classes designed for higher performing students, the curriculum focuses on the ability of students to explain and use evidence--a far more democratic method. This method promotes students' ability to participate in society. Glass (2008) and Freire (2007) both suggest the purpose of the test and to a greater extent the school is to separate society into distinct groups. This is a scary concept. Many teachers, as I did, initially resist this paradigm, as old TV and movie images of brainwashing and indoctrination flood our thoughts. I am not suggesting that we are brainwashing our students, however as teachers explain women rights without talking about Betty Friedan, are teachers not just teaching "valuable trivia", as Ms. Plum suggests, which is in turn bordering on indoctrination, as they let the tests drive instructional practices and define education (Madaus, 2009). Are teachers are letting politicians, who do not understand the mechanics of teaching, define what is being done in classrooms? (Ravitch, 2010). Again I am not suggesting all hope is lost, as teachers are still finding ways to veer from the prescribed curriculum, but they are still compromising their beliefs. Given this research study it appears the compromises will continue to get worse and the virtual lines drawn in the sand by teachers, that define how much they are willing to change, will continue to be pushed back. Teachers are being

worn down by the test, often fearing their own credibility, as a teacher will be attacked, if they speak out against the test (Cohn, 2007). I believe the compromises are becoming more devastating, just as Nichols and Berliner (2008) suggest. I fear lines each year are becoming more easily changed, compromises becoming less frustrating because of the pressure associated with the test.

Teachers in this study are increasing skill and drill activities that promote certain ideas and leave out others. As this increases something has to give, I fear as teachers bow to the data driven mentality, teachers will continue to decrease the number of critical thinking activities, which encourage students to ask meaningful questions and develop informed decisions then, the risk of indoctrination will increase. I think teachers are suppressing their beliefs about good educational practices at certain times and doing what is expected or choosing not to teach classes where the pressure is highest. One of my biggest concerns is good teachers are struggling. Ravitch (2010) recounts her favorite teacher who was defined as a great educator and pondered if her

greatness as a teacher--- her ability to inspire students and to change their lives
--- would go unrewarded because it is not in demand and can not be measured.

And let's face it. She would be stifled not only by the data mania of her
supervisors but the jargon, the indifference...

Teachers in this study are being stifled by the data as they eliminate performance based learning and certain topics for the test which encourages one way to think about things, promoting a form of indoctrination. I worry if this is not what is occurring, given our reliance of the state mandated test data, promoting indoctrination.

Assessment for Learning

One of the main claims of the SMT is that they can improve learning (Amerien & Berliner, 2002; Nichols & Berliner, 2008). The data in this study suggests this not occurring. State mandated tests do not necessarily improve education, but in more cases than not they simply improve the scores, which is not necessarily the same (Nichols & Berliner, 2008; Ravitch, 2010). Learning is not being measured but instead what is being assessed is how well teachers, school, and administrators play the game of testing. Learning is not improving just test taking. Given the test results of the SMT arrive at the end of a semester, they do not give teachers the opportunity to engage in the data. It is difficult to accept that assessment is for learning or of learning occurring. However, one thing that is being assessed is the teacher.

Under the current system responsibility for academic success does not belong to students or their families, but the teachers (Ravitch, 2010). Assessment for learning is not occurring because teachers are finding it difficult to use data, when they are faced with a judgment of their success. The data suggests teachers in NE County are being forced into the one-size fits all mentality of testing. While, teachers in World History and Government are using assessment for learning, they are still bound by external barriers created by the high stakes tests. Ms. Yellow, a World History teachers' interview reveals how her practices changed because of U.S. History EOCT scores. She felt pressure to use her assessments to improve scores in other classes this is not assessment for learning but an assessment of test taking. It is ironic that assessment for learning is not occurring, given the calls for data driven instruction. I believe, the reliance on one test as a final indicator of success stops data analysis, which limits gatekeeping. I want to reiterate this is not always occurring and teachers are still using data, but it is limited. Teacher decision-making is being undermined because they can't engage with the data effectively.

However, this situation is often due to conflicts between assumptions about testing versus what is actuality occurring.

Reality v. Actuality

One of the biggest concerns of this research study is the division between what is happening and what people believe is happening. The perception of many parts of society is that students are becoming more educated and learning more (Nichols & Berliner 2008; Ravitch 2010). Teachers in this study do not believe this is occurring, instead they believe that students might be getting better at taking tests, as scores are improving but more learning is not occurring. More material is being covered but students are learning little or no depth. Ravitch (2010) explains students cannot transfer knowledge. A student can take a multiple-choice test one day and score well. Then, take another test, the next day, that assesses the same information in a different format and score poorly. If students were learning information, there should be some consistency in scores, but this is not occurring. If learning was occurring, then there would be consistency in NAEP scores and state mandated scores, yet this isn't happening (Nichols & Berliner, 2008). Some of the interviews revealed that students know the information, but they cannot reproduce this on a multiple-choice test. Students are not learning more, but that is what people believe. This assumption increases the pressure on teachers to improve test scores.

The second myth of state mandated tests is teachers are improving educational practices given the test (Nichols & Berliner 2008). The changes to instructional practices are not necessarily positive. Teachers in this study suggest they have less time to meet students where they are or to help them make connections between the content and their world. Teachers in their interviews lament about how they have to give up projects and activities that allow for student exploration because of the demands of the test. All of the participants acknowledge the

importance and validity of PBAs but are limiting their use. Educational practices are changing but there seems to be little evidence that these changes are improving education only tests scores.

The third myth, teachers are unprepared for the role of gatekeeper and need to be told what they need to do (Noddings, 1979; Maclure, 2005). Teachers in this study have a better understanding of their students, community, and schools than policy makers. When the teachers were asked about if the test reshaped student teacher relationships, some of the teachers explained how you had to know your students regardless of the test. By knowing the students they can determine the best way to help them learn. While other lamented that the test made it more difficult to “meet the kids where they were,” which she explained was important to good educational practices (Ms. Plum interview, 5/22/10). So it would make sense that teachers are better prepared to make important educational decisions for their students. Policy makers do not take into consideration the impact teachers and students beliefs have on learning, nor SES, personal attitudes, or goals which all have a major role in a students’ success/failure on a test (Ravitch, 2010; Nichols & Berliner, 2008). Teachers understand this but; there is a fear that if teachers were given gatekeeping power, some teachers may not do what they are supposed to. This is where classroom based assessment could be used in tandem with teacher evaluations and other tools. The test is not needed to ensure teachers are making the right decisions for students; teachers are prepared for this role.

The majority of teachers want to inspire students; all the teachers in this study imply they want to help students become educated citizens. Teachers understand what is necessary to help students become successful. I am not advocating a system without monitoring. I simply suggest teachers can make key decisions for students. Most people can pinpoint the one teacher who inspired them to be who they are. They rarely remember the content, but instead the relationship

built and the experiences in that class. The great teachers, people remember, are being lost in a sea of data. Teachers of the past have been able to shape education rather effectively given the number of educated people that graduate from colleges and universities across the U.S. It is demeaning to believe that suddenly teachers cannot make decisions. Teachers have a long history of gatekeeping, but the system of accountability is trying to beat this role out of them. The system portrays teachers as skilled workers who need the SMT to do their job. This role is similar to the facilitator of fact and foremen model introduced in chapter five, where decisions have already been made and teachers are left with fulfilling the curriculum not creating it. However, teachers desire the power to make decisions and they understand that standards and guidelines may be necessary. They do not balk at standards or guidelines, but they feel they have the skills to guide students through this material without the accountability of a test. Ms. Violet's statements found in chapter 5, describe this situation the best, "Its insulting, like why should I even go to college, if you're just going to lay out exactly what I'm teaching. What's the point?" Teachers are willing and able to take on the role of gatekeeping, but because of cultural perceptions of teachers driven by test scores, they are not given the opportunity. Leading to a new question, is true gatekeeping possible given the demands of the test?

Can teachers be gatekeepers?

One of the major findings of this study is the roles that teachers believe they can take, given the demands of the test. In chapter five, I describe the following three roles: facilitator of facts, foreman/manager, and the gate openers models. The first two models posit that gatekeeping is impossible given the demands of the test. These models assume that all fundamental decisions have already been made and the teacher is there to deliver the information. The main difference between the two is the responsibility the teacher has in the

success of his/her students. These first two models suggest that teachers want to make more decisions but are stifled by the demands of the test. If I were to use only the teachers who believe they are facilitators of facts or foremen/managers in their classroom then, I would assume that teachers in Northeast County have no power to be gatekeepers.

However, a majority of the participants suggest they are gate openers, which implies a quasi-gatekeeping status. Under this model, decisions about content have been made but it is up to each individual teacher to determine how to proceed with the information. Each teacher is responsible for deciding what comes through the gate. While this model is more appealing than the previous two, it still implies that teachers are unable to make important decisions and the test is ultimately the gatekeeper, not the teacher.

This model is an attempt, by teachers, to maintain some control over decisions within the current test-driven environment. The problem with this model is much of the interview data in this study does not reflect the teachers' ability to make decisions that they feel are important, especially in EOCT classes. Ms. Plum laments about her "inability to meet students where they are" and the "valuable trivia" she felt compelled to teach students. Mr. Gray says

I feel that when I was teaching the EOCT class that I had to constantly
teach and reteach and hammer away at the key material--the key information at a
much more limited curriculum.

Ms. Yellow explains how she "added more multiple choice assessments" because that is what is needed for the test. Ms. Green explains how she has been unable to reconcile including "performance based assessments, when there is multiple-choice test in April." These comments imply that teachers are not gatekeepers or gate openers because they feel they must conform to the demands of the tests.

So, can teachers be gatekeepers? I still believe, yes, because teachers are finding ways to incorporate important material and ideas into their classrooms, as seen in the interview data. Ms. Violet's inclusion of Alice Paul and Mr. Gold's Mayflower compact activity show teachers are still making key decisions. However, the ability to be a true gatekeeper is in jeopardy, especially in EOCT classes where teachers feel pressured to make their students perform on the state mandated tests.

Limitations

While this study offers some interesting elements for discussion. It is also important to recognize the limitations of the study.

The Case Study Approach

This is a small multiple case study and with any research conducted in schools it is situational (Cornbleth, 2001; Grant, 2008). This makes it difficult to generalize these findings. While the multiple case study approach did provide a clearer understanding of what was occurring in NE county, it is unclear if similar results would be found in larger counties with the same number of participants. However, I believe this study can be used to guide other research studies and the results can be used to build a better understanding of the situation in Georgia and possibly in other states with a strong fidelity approach.

The Quantitative Component

As with the case study approach, the qualitative component is also restricted by size. Only 26 participants responded to the survey so there are not enough participants to run statistical data, such as p values that would illustrate correlations between variables. The questionnaire provided an overview of all 8th-12th social studies teachers in NE county but there are not enough data to draw valid statistical conclusions that could be generalizable. However,

the survey can be used with a larger sample to generate more data that could then be used to make valid statistical conclusions.

CRCT Data

One major limitation is the number of participants governed by the CRCT. Only four of the 8th grade teachers responded to the survey and only two agreed to an interview, so it made it difficult to discuss the CRCT component. Although I often equated EOCT and CRCTs, the CRCT proved to be more distinctive than the EOCT/GHSGT, than I had originally anticipated. The CRCT is a state mandated test, but it has no official stakes tied to the test. Even though the scores are tied directly to the teachers, CRCT data in social studies has recently been ignored because of the problems with the test. The two interview participants provide some details about the impact of the test, but it was difficult to ascertain themes or ideas given the number of the participants. The diversity between the two participants also made themes difficult to pin down, as the two teachers had very divergent views about education and the test. This study could be improved by including all middle school teachers in NE county, providing a comparable number of middle and high school students. If there were more participants from the middle school, I believe the data on CRCT subjects would be much richer.

A Variety of Influences

While, I tried to explain the influences that might impact the data, it was difficult to anticipate and describe all factors.

I believe a school's test score history could impact the perception teachers have about the test. The two middle school teachers had different views on the demands of the test. Ms. Black from Ulysses S. Grant Middle School has one of the most negative views on the demands of testing and her school consistently scored poorly on the SMT. Ms. Green from Martin Van

Buren Middle School had the most positive perspective on the CRCT and the best test scores for all middle schools in Northeast County. However there was not enough conclusive data to suggest that test score history is correlated to positive/negative perceptions of the test, because this theme did not occur at the high school level. More schools would need to be studied and more on site analysis would be required. Given, I did not speak to administrators or other faculty or staff, I can't determine if school culture was a large impact on how teachers describe the test. I assume how a school or department feels about the data has some impact on teachers' perceptions of the test, however I cannot be sure given the current data.

Another limitation is without more data related to social studies training it is difficult to determine if the findings are a result of the SMT or based on already held beliefs about testing and its impact on social studies. This study could have been improved if I had more information about teachers' educational background and rationale for teaching. I made assumptions about their beliefs based on other statements, however more direct questioning is needed to determine where the beliefs about testing and gatekeeping originated. This line of questioning could clarify how much teachers had changed because of the test. Also this study depends solely on self reporting data, without classroom observations, so it is difficult to know what is really being taught or not taught in classrooms. I made a lot of assumptions about what they are doing and why they were doing it because I did not actually observe the classrooms. Observations would have generated more details about what is actually occurring in these teachers' classrooms. However, without evidence of what each teachers' practices looked like before the test, it would be difficult to examine how much was actually different.

The variety of unexplored factors makes a cause/effect relationship almost impossible to determine or explain. While I tried to account for different variables and explain their impact,

inevitably some things were missed. Because I was the researcher, my personal beliefs and perspectives limited the themes I illustrated and saw. My relationship with many of the subjects also affected my interpretation and analysis of data. I made every attempt to limit my personal bias on the analysis but my perspective and beliefs are embedded in the research.

Implications

Although the research study has some limitations, it does have some implications for social studies teachers, educational researchers, teacher educators and future research. Social studies teachers can use this research study to navigate the accountability era by becoming more aware of the compromises being made for the sake of the test. Educational researchers can use this study to conduct similar studies in different counties in Georgia or across the nation. They can also use the data to broaden and clarify the discussion about the impact of testing in social studies. Teacher educators can use the data to inform how classes for teachers are taught. Finally this study opens the door for future research questions.

Lessons for Teachers

Teachers reading this research study should look very carefully at the compromises that are being made, as minor changes can easily become big compromises. They should continue to try and find a happy medium between the test and what is important to the teacher, as suggested by Cuban (2009). The key for teachers is to find a way to make decisions about assessment and instructional practices informed by the test but not driven by the test (Ravitch, 2010). This is no easy task, but teachers need to be aware of the compromises they are making and their consequences, so teachers can guard their decision making power better, which is a key element of gatekeeping. As for content, teachers need to be careful not to reduce social studies to a series of trivial and disconnected facts. Teachers need to make sure that they are teaching what NCSS

calls powerful social studies that is connected to not only the lives of the students but bigger ideas such as citizenship and democracy (NCSS, 2007). Again, I do not claim this is easy, given the pressure to cover material. Teachers choosing this road may face obstacles and criticism. However, I do not believe social studies teachers entered education to teach facts, they wanted to inspire and provide tools for their students so that they can be successful, educated citizens in a democracy. Teachers must mind the gate, and remain strong in their beliefs to ensure personal beliefs are not destroyed. They must guard their decision making power.

If possible teachers need to reach a place where they are questioning the curriculum driven by testing within in their schools and communities. Teachers need to start taking a stand for the things they believe in. This means teachers must be willing to go against the grain. Just as the state mandated tests can slowly take power away from teachers, teachers can chip away at the power of the test by pushing back against the demands of the test at the local level and state level. Twelve step programs suggest the 1st step is admitting there is a problem. Teachers in the accountability era must accept the test but not the power it has over them. By knowing the pitfalls of the tests, perhaps teachers can better navigate the system. While the best answer is probably the complete elimination of state mandated tests, especially EOCTs, tools for navigating the system is the best alternative.

Educational Researchers

Future researchers of SMT can use the data found to enrich the discussions surrounding the controversies and benefits of SMTs. The data provided confirms some of the alarming trends of high stakes testing. State mandated tests are not improving education or instruction, while changes to practice are occurring these changes are not necessarily positive (Amerien & Berliner, 2002; Nichols & Berliner, 2008; Heuber & Hauser, 1998; Savage, 2003). SMTs are not

measuring success, but good test taking skills (Madaus et al., 2007). The test is undermining the role of the teachers (Madaus & Kellegan, 1992). Student centered activities are on the decline, with lecture increasing because of the pressure to cover material (Cuban, 2009; Vogler, 2006; van Hover, 2006). History classes, especially U.S. History, are being reduced to a list of important facts that need to be memorized (Grant, 2003; Vogler, 2006; Popham, 2001), as suggested by Ms. Violet and Ms. Plum as they referred to the specificity of facts in the US History curriculum (Interview with Ms. Violet 5/23/10; Interview with Ms. Plum 5/22/10) This leads to more skill and drill activities, emphasizing coverage instead of understanding, (Vogler, 2006; Ravitch, 2010, Popham, 2001; Madaus, et al, 2007). As seen in Mr. Gary' lamentation about the things he could not do in an EOCT class because of the amount of material that had to be covered (Interview with Mr. Gray 5/19/10). Critical thinking and higher order thinking are on the decline so teachers are providing fewer opportunities for students to engage in the content (Onosko, 1991; Parker, 1989; Wineburg, 1991), as seen in the reduction of performance based learning in this study. However, teachers are finding positive ways to use the tests (van Hover & Heinecke, 2005; Libresco, 2005). The test is changing the way teachers make decisions (Au, 2007; Segall, 2008; White, 2007; Diamond & Spillane, 2004). The data represented in this study can be used to confirm trends found in the literature review.

Educational researchers can also use the interview protocol and questionnaire to further their personal research interests into state mandated testing. They can build on the data presented to develop a more comprehensive view of the impact of the test on social studies instruction and gatekeeping. The three models of teaching defined in Chapter five could be used to further explain how teachers define their roles given the demands of the test. Researchers could also explore how teacher education programs are training teachers to meet the demands of the SMT.

Teacher Educators

Given this study, teacher educators need to develop classes and curriculum that instruct teachers on not only how to balance their personal beliefs and the demands of the test but also to challenge the notion of the test as an appropriate form of assessing knowledge in schools. Under the current conditions, teacher educators need to be preparing future educators for the pressures associated with the test. They need to teach these educators ways to incorporate their rationale and beliefs about citizenship education into the demands of the test. Teacher education program want students to develop units that incorporate multiple learning styles and activities, which is important but these lessons are often not feasible in an EOCT class. The program needs to teach educators how to adapt these lessons into shorter amounts of times given the pressure to cover material is so high. Future teachers need to be instructed on how to embed high quality/deep lessons in a short period of times. This is a difficult task to undertake and many first year teachers are unprepared for this balancing act (van Hover, 2007). While, this may not be the most desirable outcome it was necessary right now, until the educational environment changes. This is only a temporary fix, long term teachers need to become more involved in changing the policies that force teachers to make these compromises.

For the teacher educators they must also teach these future teachers to be policy participants; they need be well versed in how educational policy is being used to manipulate certain responses. They need to realize the test's goal is to control what is occurring in the classroom and challenge the assumptions of the tests in the political arena. If, future teachers were taught to be better gatekeepers, this would help them not only meet the demands of test but also question the policy. Most teachers entering educations from major universities are filled with optimism and a desire to make real changes in the lives of students. However many of them

do not know how to accomplish this given the demands of educational policy. They feel that they have to make changes and this is not true. Teachers need to be prepared for this environment. Future teachers need to be mentored in the ways of accountability so they can negotiate not only its demands but be better prepared to be teacher advocates. As teacher advocates, they can challenge the system more effectively and perhaps bring an end to the current accountability demands. Future educators need skills to both negotiate and challenge the current educational system.

Implications for Future Research

This study opens the doors for several other topics. I suggest the following specific research questions for future study and then I discuss some of the things I alluded to in my study but wish I had done further research on. One possible research question that needs to be explored is: What role does a persons' educational background have on their perception of testing and gatekeeping? This is an important topic because personal beliefs and understandings of the context play such an important role in what actually is occurring in the classroom (Cornbleth, 2001; Sacks, 1999). It is very difficult to determine if the behaviors described in this study are a result of the tests or prior beliefs held about testing and gatekeeping. Given that Nichols & Berliner (2008) suggest the background of students affects how they do on the test, it seems reasonable to assume that a teacher who has also had a high personal success rate on tests would see the tests in a different light than those who are *poor test takers*. More research is needed in this area so a fuller picture of the impact of SMT can be created. Another research question that needs to be explored is: How do teachers understand the demands of NCLB compared to what is occurring at the local level and in their own school? This question must be explored to demystify the demands of NCLB. Many teachers and other stake holders do not understand what

NCLB does and does not do. Many of the perceived problems of the tests explored in this study are due to how Georgia has decided to implement NCLB not necessarily the policy itself. I am not saying that NCLB does not have problems but if we as teachers are to make real changes to the system we have to understand the demands of the policy and who to address our concerns to. A research study about this would broaden the understanding of the implementation of NCLB at the local level. A third important question that needs to be explored is: What role do students play in negotiating the demands of state mandated tests? The test is given to the students, even though teachers feel judged by it. There is research that suggests minority students are dropping out of school because of the test and are receiving and sub standard instruction because of the test (McNeil, 2000). However, there is little research that explores how they actually negotiate the tests, do they feel the test is a mechanism of control? Do students believe the choices teachers make to help them pass are really helping? If teachers understood the way students were dealing with the tests, then teachers could make more informed decisions about their instructional practices. This question is especially important if SMT continue to be apart of the educational expereince of students.

A fourth important research question that needs to be explored is :How do teachers understand gatekeeping? If the role of teachers is to be a getekeeper of the curriculum, it is important that teachers understand what this entails. By completeing a research study on teachers understanding of gatekeeping, a more defined concept can be created. Therefore, criticism such as teachers are unprepared for the role of gatekeeping and the perception that teachers need some one to tell them how to teach can be avoided (Noddings, 1979; Eisenhart & Towne, 2003). While, Thornton (2001) has a clear defintion of gatekeeping, I am not sure many teachers are familar with this concept nor do they have a clear idea about what this really looks like in a

classroom right now because of the demands of testing. The misunderstanding of gatekeeping could also be responsible for the different models of teaching described in chapter five. These models open another research door related to gatekeeping. Do teachers in other contexts define themselves as facilitators of facts, foreman/managers, and/or gate openers OR Do they hold to the gatekeeping analogy? This is an important element because if the models established in this study hold true in other locations, perhaps gatekeeping needs to be replaced with a term more in line with what is occurring given state mandated testing. It is essential to understand how testing is impacting the perceived role of educators especially in social studies. So teachers can become better advocates for their profession.

A final research question that I suggest is: What is the relationship between a school's test score history and teachers' perceptions of the test? This question is important because it might help explain why Ms. Green and Ms. Black have such a different view of the test. In a broader context it may help to illuminate why schools that have good test scores do not appear to feel the pressure of SMT. The relationship between test score history and perceptions of the test would also be helpful to administrators and other school officials as they design professional learning opportunities. The current system focuses on the bad test scores possibly contributing to the negative perceptions. Perhaps if this relationship was better understood it would be easier to empower those teachers whose scores are bad instead of punishing them as Cohn (2007) suggests.

There are other topics that I alluded to in this study, that also need more exploration, such as the role of the social studies CRCT in instructional decision making. It would be interesting to explore how social studies is viewed in relationship to other subjects taught at the middle school level. Also, I believe it would be interesting to see how the CRCT is viewed at different grade levels. As described earlier the lack of data at this level warrants more research.

Future research is also needed on the stakes tied to teachers, little data exists that discusses the stakes tied to teachers. Given this was a key part of this research, I believe more data needs to be gathered on this phenomenon. Within this research, the difference between the U.S. History EOCT and Economics EOCT should also be explored in more detail. In the study teachers revealed their discontent with the trivial facts associated with U.S. History but Economic's content was rarely mentioned. I posited the stress associated with having test scores tied directly to a given teacher highly impacted teacher decision making but perhaps it is the way the content is being tested that is a bigger factor. There are lots of unexplored avenues that this research brings to light.

Final Conclusions

In NE County curricular decisions are being altered because of the test, gatekeeping is being compromised. Discussions over the impact of state mandated tests are just beginning. Ravitch (2010) is beginning to realize the unintended consequences of state mandated tests like Nichols and Berliner (2008) and Madaus (2009) suggested. Most teachers, educational leaders, and researchers are acknowledging some of the problems with tying high stakes to student and teacher success. These same people are not calling for an end to testing (Reeves, 2007). However what they do want is a better system and if it must be one based on accountability it should fulfil certain critieria.

A good accountability system must include professional judgement, not simply a test score, and other measures of students' achievement such as grades, teachers' evaluations, student work, attendance and graduation rates. It should also report what the school and district are providing in terms of resources, class size, space, well educated teachers and a well-rounded curriculum (Ravitch, 2010)

I believe teachers need to take a more active role in educational policy and make demands on the system. The system makes demands on the teachers, but little is said about students, parents, or school boards. Teachers must make similar demands, they need to be better advocates for teacher agency. This research study portrays how teachers are compromising and relegating certain decisions. However, this study should not be viewed as a simple list of the problems associated with state mandated testing. Instead, it should empower teachers to examine their own practices and take a stand for what he/she feels is important. This study should be viewed with optimism, because teachers in NE County are not playing the testing game, by teaching only to the test, and focusing only on teaching test taking practices (Amerien and Berliner, 2002; Ravitch, 2010). All the teachers in this study are still using performance based assessments as part of their instructional practices. Mr. Gold is still teaching the Mayflower Compact even though it is not in the standards. Mr. Blue is finding ways to incorporate critical thinking and indepth discussions in spite of the standards. The majority of teachers in NE County are not letting the test dictate student teacher relationships. As a whole, teachers are still 'hugging the middle' maintaining power over issues and ideas that each teacher values (Cuban, 2009). Even though changes are occuring in NE county, teachers are ensuring the test does not dominate all areas of decision making.

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Appendix A- Questionnaire

**As you read and respond to each statement/question,
consider how it relates social studies.**

Section 1: Attitudes about State Mandated Tests (SMT)

Directions: When considering your attitudes about state mandated tests, circle the number that **BEST** represents your agreement or disagreement about the following statements. CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1.The state mandated tests are a reflection of what students know.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The state mandated tests affect the instructional choices I make.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The state mandated tests affect the types of assessments I give.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The state mandated tests affect the content I teach.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The state mandated tests affect how long I spend on certain topics.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The state mandated tests narrow the curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The state mandated tests increase the stress level for teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
8.The state mandated tests improve instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
9. The state mandated tests affect teacher creativity in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The state mandated tests help students learn more.	1	2	3	4	5
11.The state mandated tests overemphasize memorization.	1	2	3	4	5
12. The state mandated tests increases collaboration between teachers.	1	2	3	4	5

Section 2: Personal Practices

13. Which of these teachers **BEST** represents your approach to state mandated tests in social studies?

A. Teacher A: “State mandated tests have improved my social studies instructional practices. I embrace the challenges to improve instruction and feel that these tests are a good tool to improve instruction. I have increased my standards and students have risen to the new demands. Tests and instruction has become better.”

B. Teacher B: “State mandated tests have caused me to change my instructional practices in social studies. I have started to do more test taking skills activities and focused my instruction on certain key topics. These changes have been difficult because I have to limit some content coverage, which I feel is important.”

C. Teacher C: “State mandated tests are just a minor inconvenience in social studies and I have not changed anything I do in the classroom. Social studies curriculum is continually adapted based on the needs and interests of myself and my students ”

Directions: When considering your personal practices, circle the number that **BEST** represents your agreement or disagreement about the following statements. CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
14. I teach to the state mandated test in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I teach only what is on the state mandated test in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I spend time on skills needed for the state mandated test.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I use overt teaching practices, such as test taking skills and writing rubrics to help prepare my students for the state mandated test.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I feel the test narrows my ability to cover material in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I feel pressured to cover the necessary content before the test in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I feel the test has improved my ability to cover necessary material in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I feel the test shows what students know in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5

22. I feel the test has improved my teaching in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I collaborate with colleagues because of the state mandated test in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I feel the tests help students learn in social studies	1	2	3	4	5
25. I feel the test impacts my instructional choices in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5

Section 3: Types of Test Items

Directions: Given state mandated tests in social studies, what types of test items do you include on major assessments?

26. Multiple Choice	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no
27. Short Answer	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no
28. Document Based Questions	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no
29. Fill in the Blank	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no
30. True and False	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no
31. Essays	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no

Section 4: Instructional Choices

Directions: When considering your instructional choices, circle the number that **BEST** represents your agreement or disagreement about the following statements. CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
32. My personal beliefs affect my instructional choices in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Best practices affect my instructional choices in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
34. The format of State Mandated Tests affects my instructional choices.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Interest in helping my students score well on the State Mandated Test in social studies affects my instructional choices.	1	2	3	4	5
36. Interactions with the principal affect my instructional choices in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
37. School culture affects my instructional choices in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5

38. Staff development affects my instructional choices in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
39. Interaction with parents affects my instructional choices in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
40. Avoiding punishment or humiliation for poor performance affects my instructional choices in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
41. AYP affects my instructional choices in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
42. My colleagues affect my instructional choices in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
43. I use more worksheets in social studies because of the test.	1	2	3	4	5
44. I use more lectures in social studies because of the test.	1	2	3	4	5
45. I use more small group activities in social studies because of the test.	1	2	3	4	5
46. I use more large group activities in social studies because of the test.	1	2	3	4	5

47. How much does the State Mandated Test influence your instructional choices in social studies?

- A. Considerably
- B. Important but not my main concern
- C. Not Very Much
- D. Not at all

Section 5: Instruction in General

Directions: When considering social studies instruction, circle the number that **BEST** represents your agreement or disagreement about the following statements. CIRCLE ONE IN EACH ROW

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
48. Teachers must move too quickly in order to cover all required material in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
49. The recall of facts is being overemphasized in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5

50. Teachers spend more time collaborating due to the State Mandated Test in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
51. Teachers feel like they are doing everything possible to prepare students for the test in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
52. Teachers are making more of an effort to differentiate due to the state mandated test in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
53. Teachers are spending more time helping individual students in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
54. Teachers feel there is an overemphasis on preparing for the test in social studies.	1	2	3	4	5

55. How would your instructional choices be different if you did not have a state mandated test in social studies?

Section 6: Preparation Time on State Mandated Tests

56. What State Mandated Test affects you in social studies?

57. How much time do you spend preparing for the State Mandated Test in social studies?

Section 7: Background Information

58. Gender
- A. Male
 - B. Female

59. What is your race/ethnicity? _____

60. Date of Birth: _____ / _____ / _____
Month Day Year

61. Father's(or primary caregiver's) highest education level

- A. Less than a high school degree
- B. High school graduate or GED certificate
- C. Some college
- D. College degree
- E. Post-graduate or professional degree
- F. Not present in the home

62. Mother's(or primary caregiver's) highest education level

- A. Less than a high school degree
- B. High school graduate or GED certificate
- C. Some college
- D. College degree
- E. Post-graduate or professional degree
- F. Not present in the home

63. How many years have you been teaching? _____

64. What subject(s) do you currently teach? _____

65. What grade level(s) do you currently teach? _____

66. What is the highest degree you have earned?

- A. Bachelors
- B. Masters
- C. Specialist
- D. Doctorate

67. Would you be willing to participate in an interview about this topic?

Yes _____ No _____

Appendix B -Semi –Structured Interview Protocol

Areas of focus from questionnaires

Sections 2-6

Gatekeeping Quotes

“gatekeeping encompasses the decisions teachers make about curriculum and instruction and the criteria they use to make those decisions”--Thornton

“curriculum planning is a continuous process that, as materials and procedures are developed, they are tried out, their results appraised, their inadequacies identified, suggested improvements indicated; there is preplanning, redevelopment and then reappraisal; and in this kind of continuing cycle, it is possible, for the curriculum and instructional program, to be continuously improved over the years” ----Tyler

“high stakes tests ... reshape student-teacher relationships and define what an educated person should know, understand, and be able to do, and what should be taught and learned”---Madaus, et al.

“classrooms are where teachers make choices at the intersection of boundaries, expectations, and challenges.”--Webeck et al.

Questions related to quotes

Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

How do state mandated tests and standards effect your decision making?