THE IMPACT OF THE OHIO GRADUATION TEST ON GEOGRAPHY INSTRUCTION AS PERCEIVED BY THE SECONDARY SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS IN CENTRAL OHIO

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Cemalettin Ayas, M.Ed.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University

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Dissertation Committee:

Professor Steven L. Miller, Advisor
Professor W. Randy Smith
Professor Cynthia A. Tyson

Approved by

____________________________

Advisor

College of Education and Human Ecology
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of social studies teachers concerning the impact of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) on geography instruction in the secondary schools of central Ohio. The central research question was, “From the perspectives of social studies teachers in secondary schools of central Ohio, what has been the effect of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) on geography instruction?” In order to answer this major question in addition to supplementary research sub-questions, an exploratory study employing quantitative methods was designed and successfully carried out in accordance with the procedures explained in detail in the methodology chapter.

To summarize, the population of this study consisted of all secondary social studies teachers who are currently teaching in the middle and high schools of central Ohio. A specifically developed 28-item cross-sectional survey as the major data collection instrument for this study was constructed through a content validity approach and pilot tested. The survey instrument was then administered via the Internet to a randomly selected sample of secondary social studies teachers. The number of teachers who responded to the questionnaire is 206. The data gathered were analyzed by SPSS 16.0. Data analysis of the study basically utilized descriptive statistics. Tables and figures were constructed to present the results. The research instrument was intended to measure the perspectives of social studies teachers regarding whether or not there has been a
change in geography instruction following the OGT, especially in the areas of instructional time devoted to teaching geography, curriculum and the instructional strategies used in the classroom, use of teaching materials, emphasis of particular geographic concepts/topics, and perceptions about geography and the impact of the OGT.

The major demographic profile of the research subjects, according to responses from social studies teachers who participated in the study, is by and large Caucasian males who teach middle class students with above average OGT scores in suburban public schools for 11 or more years. A great majority of those teachers have a master’s degree, hold a comprehensive social studies (7-12) licensure and completed at least two or more college level geography courses. One-third of these teachers work at a middle school and two-thirds work in a high school setting. Typically they work as teachers of U.S. History, World History and U.S. Government.

Due to the nature of the OGT as a state-mandated standardized testing program, the results of this study mainly contributed to two bodies of literature: geography education in particular and high-stakes testing in general. Based on the overall research findings, it would be reasonable to infer that the OGT has impacted the way in which geography instruction is delivered in the secondary schools of central Ohio. Yet, this effect showed some variation by school level (middle school versus high school) as well as by grade level (Grades 6-8, 9-10 and 11-12).

Parallel to the current literature regarding the effects of high-stakes testing on teaching and learning, the results of this study indicate that social studies teachers do practice more of a “teaching to the test” strategy since the implementation of the OGT.
The findings specifically suggest that teachers who teach the grades where the OGT is administered evidently perform more “teaching to the test” behavior and are under more pressure. However, the most important impact that the OGT has had on geography instruction is a noteworthy decrease in the amount of time teachers spend with geography in their general social studies curriculum. According to the data, the time devoted to teaching geography is diminishing. Even though geography is one of the social studies subjects tested on the OGT, the decrease in the amount of time to teach geography within the social studies curriculum might imply that the geography portion of the social studies test on the OGT is not as important as the others or that geography is over-shadowed in the social studies curriculum by other subjects—particularly by history. This was evidenced by the finding that teachers consider geography the least emphasized among the social studies content areas tested on the OGT.

As a result, along with recommendations for further research, contributions to the related literature and implications for both policy-making and teaching and learning were discussed in detail.
DEDICATION

Dedicated to my wife, Mehtap, and my children, Beyza, Mehmet and Zeynep

And my mother and father, Ayşe and Mehmet Ayas
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of this dissertation is my dream came true. Yet, I have not been alone through this tough and long journey. I must therefore take this opportunity to recognize many people who were around throughout the process. It is their support, guidance, encouragement and friendship that made this dissertation possible.

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I also want to thank the other faculty and staff in our department of Social Studies & Global Education, namely Dr. Merry M. Merryfield, Dr. Kent J. Minor, and Carol Barbee for their invaluable contributions to my academic growth and dissertation.

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Yılmaz, another doctoral candidate in education here at OSU, for his 24/7 friendship. He has helped me enormously from start to finish. I cannot thank him enough for the conversations and discussions we held for countless days and hours. Additionally, I really appreciate the support and friendship offered by Kerem Dirlikli and Mustafa Namlı. I also owe a big “thank you” to Osman Topaç, an OSU alumnus, who voluntarily became my voice in Turkey.

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VITA

November 23rd, 1973 ......................... Born-M. Kemalpasa, Bursa, Turkey

1995 .................................................. B.S. Geography Education
Marmara University, Istanbul, Turkey

1995-1996 ......................................... Geography and Social Studies Teacher
Semdinli High School, Hakkari, Turkey

1996-1998 ......................................... Graduate Work, Institute of Social Sciences
Marmara University, Istanbul, Turkey

1996-1999 ......................................... Geography Teacher
Halit Armay High School, Istanbul, Turkey

2000-2001 ......................................... English Teacher
Esenkent Elementary School, Istanbul, Turkey

2001-2002 ......................................... M.Ed., Social Studies Education
University of Missouri-Columbia

2004-2006 ......................................... Graduate Teaching Associate
Social Studies & Global Education
The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio
PUBLICATIONS


[http://www.tojet.net/volumes/v5i1.pdf](http://www.tojet.net/volumes/v5i1.pdf)

FIELDS OF STUDY

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Social Studies & Global Education

Minor Fields: Geography

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“We are entering the age of the infinite examination and of compulsory objectification.”

(Foucault, 1995, p. 189)

The year of 1957 interestingly marks a turning point in American educational history: the successful launch of the Sputnik—the orbiting Soviet satellite—by the former Soviets in the race for space. For many Americans, this meant that progressive education had failed the American public, leading to an educational reform movement in the United States with a focus on math and science by the U. S. Government at the national level (Dynneson, Gross, & Berson, 2003 & Marschhausen, 2006). In other words, in response to Sputnik, the federal government organized education reforms under the support of the National Science Foundation and the National Defense Education Act, providing funds that spawned the development of innovative curriculum proposals and experimental curriculum designs in order to reform the traditional curricula of the schools (Dynneson, Gross, & Berson, 2003). However, education then became a priority and focus, marking a historical period when how and what was being taught in schools was questioned by politicians (Marschhausen, 2006). Education thus became a political issue. Therefore, over the past decades, public schools in the United States have increasingly experienced an “accountability movement.” That is, policymakers at the federal, state and local levels
have worked to increase accountability in the U.S. education system by measuring student performance and raising standards as they believed that if schools raised the expectations for all students by setting rigorous standards, then learning and achievement would increase (Heubert & Hauser, 1999).

Another main phenomenon that pushed the high-stakes testing movement further was the release of the 1983 report, “A Nation at Risk,” by the Reagan administration. In this report the state of American schools was presented as in a massive educational decline in comparison to the other economically well-developed countries such as Germany and Japan (NCEE, 1983). The major argument in A Nation at Risk was that the future economic well-being of the country was linked to the educational performance of the nation’s schoolchildren and their relative standing among students from other nations (Kornhaber & Orfield, 2001). It was therefore assumed that “if the U.S. raised its educational performance, its economic performance would also rise” (p. 6). Following the publication of this report many states across the U.S. initiated comprehensive educational reforms that heavily emphasized widespread standardized testing. Consequently, testing was seen as a way to impose standards on schools and students and hold them accountable for achieving higher results (Kornhaber & Orfield, 2001).

More recently, with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which emphasized the idea of preparing young adults who can compete with the rest of the world in the global marketplace of ideas and talent, this accountability movement gained more speed. States were required to close the achievement gap and make sure that all students—including the disadvantaged—achieve academic proficiency (NCLB, 2001).
Education, consequently, turned to scientific methods of measurement to attempt to be in charge of what students were learning in schools (Marschhausen, 2006).

As the opening quote from Foucault (1995) clearly indicates, “today’s widespread implementation of standards-based reform and the federal government’s commitment to test-based accountability ensure that testing will remain a central issue in education for the foreseeable future” of American Education (Abrams & Madaus, 2003, p. 31). As a result, in the 1980’s and 1990’s, many states—including Ohio—mandated the development of minimum competency standards and required that proficiency tests be administered at various grades levels. For instance, in March of 2005, starting with the graduating class of 2007, the State of Ohio replaced the Ninth-Grade Proficiency Test with the new Ohio Graduation Test to ensure that students were armed with the knowledge they need in this global economy to be successful in the work force and higher education (OGT Guide, 2007). Therefore, in order to contribute to such a vital educational reform in Ohio, the present research explores the impact of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) on geography instruction, from the perspectives of secondary social studies teachers in central Ohio.

Background of the Study

High-stakes testing, which refers to state-mandated standardized assessments or testing programs for all school districts with serious consequences for students, educators and schools, became and continues to be a tool for reforming curriculum and instruction (Paris & Urdan, 2000). Along with the standards-based reform movement in the USA, the State of Ohio first developed new educational standards and later set the requirements for
high school graduation. The public schools of Ohio are currently subject to a high-stakes accountability program known as the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT).

The federal legislation, and the significant dollars tied to NCLB, has pushed Ohio to act, resulting in the creation of Academic Content Standards in all core subject areas—Math, Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science—as well as a series of assessments which are based on these content standards (Marschhausen, 2006). The OGT thus measures student achievement in Ohio’s new standards. In addition, the OGT serves to meet the 10th grade assessment requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) as well as providing an exit exam for Ohio. Whereas NCLB only requires that math, reading and science (added in 2007) be assessed at present, the OGT also assesses writing and social studies. Basically, the OGT is a “high-stakes” test for both students and schools, with rewards and sanctions attached to it. For students, it is a requirement to be able to graduate from high school by passing all five sections of the OGT, whereas for schools the students’ performance on the OGT serves as the basis for five indicators on the school report card. It is the performance on the State Report Card that determines funding levels, requirements for improvement planning, and public perception regarding the school (Marschhausen, 2006). If a school district fails to perform at satisfactory levels for three consecutive years, the state may then require substantial actions by the school district. A district performing poorly over time may even be taken over by the Department of Education.

Hence, the OGT became a key state reform that has made a major impact on curriculum, instruction, assessment, and school personnel throughout Ohio. The OGT for Ohio is not just a test. It is, according to Rochford (2004), “a political tool meant to
accomplish the state’s objectives in determining whether or not students meet state
curriculum requirements and pass all tests associated with graduation in order to earn an
Ohio high school diploma (p. 56). In this sense, “high stakes exit exams in their current
form are not about students. Students, to be sure, must take the tests and suffer the
consequences, but the tests are about quantifying school reform and about justifying the
expense of education” (Rochford, 2004, p. 56-57). “Ironically, the key lever in this
standards-based reform strategy—the use of high-stakes external tests—has unwittingly
provided teachers with a rationalization for avoiding or minimizing the need to teach
well; that is, to teach for in-depth understanding” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2006, p. 303).
Therefore, according to Paris & Urdan (2000), high-stakes tests provide a partial, at best,
and distorted, at worst, view of the quality of education in schools and their side effects
may actually inhibit effective teaching and erode teachers’ morale.

Moreover, surveys of teachers around the United States reveal that many teachers
are anxious about the high-stakes tests as they have such a great influence on the
curriculum and many are concerned that tests are used against them to judge the quality
of teaching and learning (Paris & Urdan, 2000). That is why teachers are more involved
in high-stakes testing. The test scores also are visible public records of their students,
becoming public comparative measures of teacher and school effectiveness (Paris &
Urdan, 2000). This makes teachers anxious about high-stakes tests, becoming more
involved as they are supposed to be responsible for improving test scores. Likewise,
McCain (2005) states that “due to increased importance placed on student performance
on these tests, teachers modify their teaching practices to ensure they are covering the
materials that will be tested—which is assuring for those in charge of the system and for
those who have to pay for it” (as cited in Marschhausen, 2006, p. 25). As a result, as Marschhausen (2006) points out, there are apparent concerns in the education community with the emphasis placed on standardized tests. That is, “state-mandated tests do matter and do influence what teachers say and do in their classrooms” (Cimbricz, 2002, p. 5). However, “the influence state-mandated testing has (or not) on teachers and teaching would seem to depend on how teachers interpret state testing and use it to guide their action” (Cimbricz, 2002, p. 16). In addition, state testing as well as particular characteristics that teachers possess, such as educational background, teaching experience, gender, coursework taught, and school characteristics, influence how teachers interpret the state-mandated testing.

Therefore, this study in general attempts to address the interaction between the stakes attached to the state test results and perceived impacts on teaching and learning. In particular, this study focuses on how social studies teachers perceive the effects of a state-wide testing program (OGT), specifically in the area of teaching and learning geography. For a better grasp of the background of the study, it is essential to set the stage by briefly looking at (a) the No Child Left Behind Act, (b) the new Ohio Social Studies Standards as well as describing (c) the Ohio Graduation Test, followed by (d) an overview of geography education in the United States.

**No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**

The renewal of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2001 as education reform legislation has come to be known as *No Child Left Behind*. Briefly, NCLB refers to a federal legislation passed in 2001 which requires states to have academic standards and a statewide assessment system to measure student achievement
and school effectiveness. As its name indicates, the NCLB aims at closing the achievement gap among all children regardless of their race, class, ethnicity, disability status and limited English proficiency, and attaches high-stakes consequences to the assessment outcomes (NCLB, 2001).

The Act sets forceful provisions on using state-mandated assessments to hold schools accountable for their students’ attainment of prescribed performance standards. For example, in order to inform parents and community about state and school progress, states must produce annual state and school district report cards. If schools do not make adequate yearly progress, they then have to take corrective actions or otherwise face serious consequences. Although a majority of educators and many researchers oppose the legislation, the Act actually gained overwhelming political and public support, and mandatory state assessment programs have come to dominate the public school landscape today (Wang, Beckett, & Brown, 2006; Hamilton, Stecher, & Klein, 2002). In fact, the NCLB expands the role of high-stakes testing by legislating their incorporation into states’ school accountability programs, such as the OGT.

*The New Ohio Social Studies Academic Content Standards*

In December 2002, the State of Ohio adopted “new” social studies content standards for all grades (K-12). The basic philosophy of Ohio’s social studies academic content standards, in the context of a standards-based curriculum, is the belief that “effective social studies integrates history, geography, economics, political science, other social sciences and humanities in order to prepare students to be participating citizens” (ODE, 2002, p. 24). That is, social studies thus becomes an integrated subject matter in schools. Basically, Ohio’s social studies content standards serve as a basis for what all
students should know and be able to do by the time they graduate from high school. The social studies content standards are intended to provide a set of clear and rigorous expectations for all students. Ohio’s social studies content standards consist of seven standards, which clearly define a balanced program of knowledge and skills necessary for active citizenship (ODE, 2002):

1. History
2. People in Societies
3. Geography
4. Economics
5. Government
6. Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities
7. Social Studies Skills and Methods.

In Ohio’s K-12 social studies, students learn knowledge and skills from each of these seven standards at every grade, but the content emphasis varies from grade to grade. For example, the emphasis on geography is greatest in grades five and six and the emphasis on history is greatest in grades seven through ten.

Unlike Ohio’s previous Model Competency Based Program, the new Ohio social studies content standards include a separate strand on geography. Yet, geography is not seen as a stand-alone subject; rather, it is taught interdisciplinarily with history and other social sciences within the Ohio social studies curricula. Principally, the goal of the geography strand in the new Ohio social studies content standards is to have students be able to “use knowledge of geographic locations, patterns and processes to show the interrelationship between the physical environment and human activity, and to explain
Moreover, the new Ohio social studies content standards largely use the national social studies standards as its framework, with respect to other individual subjects that comprise social studies such as history and geography. While the first (Culture, referring to People in Societies), second (Time, Continuity and Change, referring to History) and seventh (Production, Distribution, and Consumption, referring to Economics) are partially addressed, the third (People, Places, and Environments, referring to Geography), eighth (Science, Technology, and Society), and ninth (Global Connections) of the national social studies standards are fully addressed in the geography strand of the new Ohio social studies content standards. As identified in the “social studies curricular model” of Bednarz, Downs, & Vender (2003), geography thus becomes a part of the integrated social studies taught across grade levels by sharing time in a crowded curriculum with history, economics, political science, and other social sciences.

Grades Five, Geography of North America, and Six, World Geography, in Ohio’s integrated K-12 social studies curricula focus particularly on geography as a school subject. Yet, it also seems that the explicit teaching of geography is restricted largely to grades five and six, while an emphasis in geography disappears in high school.

The basic themes around which the geography strand is organized across the grade levels are Location, Places and Regions, Human Environmental Interaction, Movement, and Application of Geography. The teaching of geography in Ohio K-12 social studies curricula progresses from simple to complex, such as home, community, state, nation, and the world. While the early grades (K-5) focus on the introduction of basic geographic concepts, map skills and geography of North America, the middle
grades (6-8) center around the themes of location, place, regions, human and environment interaction, movement and world geography. Hence, the upper grades (9-12) focus on identifying and analyzing patterns and processes of geographic knowledge and application of geographic knowledge to life. As a result, not necessarily in practice but at least in theory, it seems that the new Ohio social studies standards try to cover geography as a complete and discrete discipline. The content of geography in the new Ohio social studies standards is explicitly organized around the elements, skills, and perspectives of the National Geography Standards (Geography for Life 1994), which defined what students should know and be able to do in geography at the conclusion of grades, four, eight, and twelve.

*The New Ohio Graduation Test (OGT)*

The Ohio Graduation Tests are the new tests that students must pass in order to earn an Ohio high school diploma. They replaced the Ninth-Grade Proficiency Tests starting with the graduating class of 2007 (OGT Guide, 2007 & ODE, 2004).

The OGT is a key part of Ohio’s educational reform to establish an aligned system of standards, assessments and accountability for Ohio schools. The testing requirements were established by the Ohio General Assembly in 2001 based on recommendations by the Governor’s Commission for Student Success (OGT Guide, 2007). The new tests are aligned to Ohio’s new academic content standards, which were adopted by the State Board of Education in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. The OGT also meets the requirements of the federal law for high school testing (ODE, 2004).
For the first time, sophomores in March 2005 (graduating class of 2007) took the OGT and were required to pass all five tests as a graduation requirement. The OGT measures knowledge and skills as articulated in Ohio’s academic content standards by the end of 10th grade in five content areas: reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies.

Classroom teachers and other educators, parents, representatives of the business community and other citizens are involved with Ohio Department of Education staff and its testing contractor in developing test items for the OGT. Also, two different committees, the Content Advisory Committee and the Fairness Sensitivity Review Committee, comprised of parents, educators and others, review all test questions to ensure that they are appropriate and not biased in any way.

Students have multiple opportunities to take the tests during their high school careers. Students take the OGT for the first time in the spring of their sophomore year (10th grade). They may retake the tests in the fall and spring of their junior and senior years and during the summer. Students who do not pass one or more sections on their first attempt will retake the tests they need to pass during their junior and senior years.

Students may graduate and receive a diploma without passing all five tests of the OGT if they meet the following requirements (OGT Guide, 2007):

- Pass four of the five tests and have missed the fifth test by no more than 10 points;
- Have had a 97 percent attendance rate through all four years of high school and must not have had an expulsion in high school;
• Have a grade point average of 2.5 out of 4.0 in the subject area missed and have completed the curriculum requirements in the subject area missed;

• Have participated in any intervention programs offered by the school and must have had a 97 percent attendance rate in such a program offered outside the normal school day; and

• Obtain letters of recommendations from each teacher in the subject area not yet passed.

The OGT for social studies is aligned with Ohio’s Academic Content Standards: K-12 Social Studies, using the 20 benchmarks for grades nine and ten. The benchmarks define the content and skills to be assessed. The content emphasis reflects the scope and sequence of the content standards for two grades. Grade Nine focuses on ‘World Studies from 1750 to the Present,” and Grade Ten focuses on “United States Studies from 1877 to the Present.” An example of concepts and skills assessed by the OGT in social studies for the geography benchmark would be:

• Using maps and geographic data to analyze changes brought by human activity, and

• Analyzing the characteristics used to define geographic regions (OGT Guide, 2007).

For each test administration, students are assessed in all seven areas of the social studies content standards. However, although there are seven academic content standards in social studies, for reporting purposes the standards are categorized as follows (ODE, 2004):
On each form of the test, all standard categories will be assessed with multiple-choice items and one short-answer item. The History Standard category will have one of the two extended-response items. The second extended-response item will be used to assess content under the People in Societies and Geography or the Economics, Government and Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities category. The Social Studies Skills and Methods standard category will not be assessed with an extended-response item.

As a result, it seems that a new wave of the accountability movement in American education is speeding up with consequences for individual states including Ohio. Because of this current movement toward judging Ohio’s schools based solely on their students’ performance on the state mandated “high-stakes” graduation test, it is crucial that a study be conducted on how this test impacts geography instruction as perceived by secondary social studies teachers in Ohio.

Geography Education in the United States

Geography has been part of American education since the 17th century. Yet, over the years, the history of geography has witnessed great changes in terms of its role in the school curricula. After the 1960s, professional geographers as well as geography educators became concerned with the declining status of geography in American education as media and educational reports were indicating the embarrassingly poor
geography knowledge of American students. Therefore, geography educators have always been concerned with improving the status of geography especially in the social studies curriculum in American schools.

As a result of this geographic illiteracy, the United States has experienced a renaissance in geographic education during the past two decades. The recognition of geography as one of the core subjects in the school curricula in Goals 2000 became an important point of time in these reform movements. However, it was not until the early 1990s during which the true renaissance of geography occurred, as educators witnessed the development of the National Geography Standards designed to initiate a grassroots movement for curricula change as a consensus project including all the major players in geographic education.

Defining geography as the “why of where,” Shearer (2003) states that geography is a powerful perspective for examining and understanding our world’s people and places. Although there is no single definition, Taaffe (1974) defines geography through the “three traditions:” (1) the spatial view, stressing maps and spatial analysis; (2) the area study view, stressing synthesis, integration, and concern with place; (3) the man-land or ecological view, stressing relations between man and the natural environment. Geography thus becomes an integrative discipline that brings together the physical and human dimensions of the world in the study of people, places, and environments (GESP, 1994). Accordingly, geography has historically played a vital role in “citizenship education” in the United States (Bednarz, 2003a; Harper, 1990; Harper, 1992; James, 1990; Marran, 2003; Stoltman, 1990). Therefore, geography becomes an essential school subject (Marran, 2003) as geographically literate citizens are aware of (1) what is
happening in the world, (2) why it is happening, and (3) how it affects other people throughout the world as well as themselves (Stoltman, 1990).

During the last two decades, geography education in the United States has undergone a renaissance to improve the quantity and quality of geography taught in American schools (Bednarz, 2002; Bednarz, Downs, & Vender, 2003; Bettis, 1996; Gandy & Kruger, 2004; Gritzner, 1990; Grosvenor, 1995; Kenreich, 2004; Murphy, 1998; Rediscovering Geography Committee, 1997; Stoltman, 1991; Stoltman & Wardley, 1997). The reason was the geographic illiteracy that was evident on the part of American students in the 1970s and 1980s (Kenreich, 2004; Murphy, 1998; Petersen et al., 1994) during which geography almost disappeared from the K-12 curriculum although it was once a mainstay of the curriculum in the United States (Black, 1996). Upon the recognition of geography as one of the core subjects in the school curricula in Goals 2000 (Bednarz, 2002; Bednarz, Downs, & Vender, 2003; Bednarz & Petersen, 1994; Grosvenor, 1995; Schoenfeldt, 2001; Stoltman & Wardley, 1997; Wilbanks, 1994), the publication and release of the national geography standards, Geography for Life 1994, was widely accepted and distributed across the U.S., and became a cornerstone in the history of school geography (Bednarz, 2002; Bednarz, Downs, & Vender, 2003; Bettis, 1996; Grosvenor, 1995; Kenreich, 2004; Schoenfeldt, 2001; Stoltman & Wardley, 1997).

Briefly, Geography for Life defined what students should know and be able to do in geography at the conclusion of grades, four, eight, and twelve. Geography for Life aimed at creating a geographically informed person who understands people, places, and environments from a spatial perspective, someone who appreciates the interdependent worlds in which we all live (GESP, 1994). As a result, geography as a school subject
experienced a shift in its pedagogy as it has traditionally been viewed as a place-naming subject, locating historical events but bearing little relationship to the discipline of geography. Therefore, the “new” geography revealed in the standards emphasized the essential nature of the discipline as an integrative and systematic approach to the places, people, and environments of the world (Marran, 1994).

Unlike traditional geography which emphasized the memorization of place names with no real geography in nature (Rossi, 1999), the new geography revealed in Geography for Life places a strong emphasis on learning to think geographically (Bednarz, 2003). Geography is thus presented as an exceptional discipline with two unique perspectives: (1) the spatial perspective, centering on location and understanding of whereness; and (2) the ecological perspective, considering how humans interact with their physical environment (GESP, 1994). Location has traditionally been an essential component of the geographic perspective; however, to a geographer location is more than just “where;” it is also “why” and “how” and “so what” (Bednarz, 1997). Teachers and students are thus urged to view geography as an approach, a point of view, and a frame of reference (Bednarz, 2003) for asking geographic questions, acquiring, organizing, and analyzing geographic information to answer geographic questions (GESP, 1994).

In addition, it seems that geography has infinite potential for integration across the curriculum. Geography as a discipline uniquely links both natural and social sciences (Taaffe, 1974) by revealing the relationship between people and the environment. In other words, geography also shares an interface with all other social sciences, such as historical geography vs. history, economic geography vs. economics, cultural geography vs. anthropology, social geography vs. sociology, population geography vs. demography,
and behavioral geography vs. psychology (Gritzner, 1990). Besides, in some respects, the educational goals of geography and social studies are strikingly similar as both fields connect in many ways (Gritzner, 1990). For example, students in secondary schools are able to apply geographic understanding across a broad range of fields, including the fine arts, sciences, and humanities. Geographic concepts thus become central to learners’ comprehension of global connections as they expand their knowledge of a diversity of historical and contemporary cultures (NCSS, 1994). Therefore, as it seems that geography lends itself so readily to integration and lacks a separate status in school curricula, it is crucial to integrate geography with other subjects in social studies and across the existing school curricula. Indeed, within the social studies curriculum history and geography complement one another and are taught best together (Bednarz, 1997; Rossi, 1999). As a result, especially today with increasing globalization, geography should be part of every historical study and every study of regions, cultures, international relations and global issues. In fact, as a broad and integrative subject matter, geography can lead students to a better knowledge of themselves and their place in the world through a geographic, spatial perspective that is unavailable elsewhere in the curriculum (Gregg & Leinhardt, 1994).

Furthermore, since the national geography standards have now existed for a decade, one might ask how much those standards have been implemented into state standards and classrooms. Yet, according to very limited research, it seems that translation of Geography for Life to state standards has produced uneven patterns because geography was considered a single subject in some states, but integrated into social studies in others (Bednarz, 1998; Munroe & Smith, 1998). This means that “despite
national standards, states still play a large role in shaping geographic education” (Bednarz, 1998, p. 87). In line with this, many states across the nation have revised their curricula to move to standards-based education, although the adoption of the national geography standards was voluntary (Bednarz, Downs, & Vender, 2003). The State of Ohio adopted “new” social studies content standards with a separate geography strand for all grades (K-12) in December 2002. For an effective K-12 social studies, Ohio’s social studies academic content standards integrated history, geography, economics, political science, other social sciences and humanities in order to prepare students to be participating citizens (ODE, 2002). The geography strand principally aimed at showing the interrelationship between the physical environment and human activity, and to explain the interactions that occur in an increasingly interdependent world, by using knowledge of geographic locations, patterns and processes (ODE, 2002).

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore how social studies teachers perceive the impact of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) on geography instruction in secondary schools of central Ohio. Specifically, the major research question of the study is as follows:

From the perspectives of social studies teachers in secondary schools of central Ohio, what has been the effect of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) on geography instruction?

In addition to the above main research question, the following are the five sub-questions that provide more in-depth focus to the study.
1. The research literature in general indicates that high stakes testing has had an impact on the amount of time teachers spend with their subjects in the curriculum. How has the time devoted to teaching geography changed since the implementation of the OGT?

2. In what ways, if any, have the curriculum and the instructional strategies used by social studies teachers who are teaching geography changed due to the implementation of the OGT?

3. How has the use of teaching materials changed due to the implementation of the OGT?

4. How has the emphasis of particular geographic concepts/topics changed following the implementation of the OGT?

5. What are the teachers’ perceptions about geography and the impact of the OGT on teaching and learning?

Significance and Context of the Study

The standards-based reform movement during the last decade gave a substantial rise to the state-level accountability systems in the United States (Abrams & Madaus, 2003). This movement also pushed the national disciplinary organizations, such as the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), to develop curriculum standards to redefine standards of excellence in the discipline and to redirect the goals of instruction (Taylor, Shepard, Kinner & Rosenthal, 2003). This politically motivated movement later turned into a huge reality as a tool to restructure the American schools: state-mandated standardized testing (Heubert & Hauser, 1999).
Although there is a significant body of research on standardized testing, very little focuses specifically on state-mandated graduation testing (i.e., Achieve, 2004; Rochford, 2004; McDermont, 2001; Schiller & Muller, 2000; Heubert & Hauser, 1999; Bond & King, 1995; and Catterall, 1989). Again, literature cites considerable research on high-stakes testing in general (i.e., Casbarro, 2005; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Greene, Winters, & Forster, 2004; Urrieta, 2004; Abrams & Madaus, 2003; Gulek, 2003; Gunzenhauser, 2003; Horn, 2003; and Sloane & Kelly, 2003); however, few empirical studies concentrate exclusively on the impact of high-stakes testing on teachers (see, for example, Louis & Schroeder, 2004; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Abrams, Pedulla & Madaus, 2003; Taylor, Shepard, Kinner & Rosenthal, 2003; Grant, 1999 & 2000; Jones et al., 1999; McMillan, Myran and Workman, 1999; Herman & Golan, 1991; and Smith, 1991).

When the existing related literature is examined, one easily discovers—as Cimbricz (2002) and Grant (2001, 2000, and 1999) found out—the three aspects of this literature:

- The existing literature is clearly contradictory;
- The bulk of the research is theoretical rather than empirical in nature; and
- Much of the research focused more on the relationship between state-mandated or high-stakes testing and students, not teachers.

Therefore, even though it seems that there is a body of research out there, in fact only a handful of studies specifically exploring teachers’ perceptions of state-mandated high-stakes testing were found. In other words, there is little empirical evidence to suggest how teachers, especially those with different characteristics such as educational
background, teaching experience and school setting, respond to changes in state-mandated tests. Educational accountability, recently fueled by the *No Child Left Behind Act*, is a particularly hot topic in educational circles today, yet there is surprisingly little research which digs deeply into teachers’ understanding of the import of state-mandated standardized testing (Grant, 1999).

Grant (1999) claims that “many current initiatives seek to raise educational standards and improve student academic performance, yet there is a curious gap in the recent talk about the national and state reforms” (p. 2). That is, he continuous, little attention is given to how teachers should respond to the recent changes in current accountability systems “while much attention focuses on defining higher expectations for what students will know and be able to do” (p. 2). Grant (1999) also claims that “testing drives much of what teachers do, and so curricular and instructional change will occur if and when state tests change;” that is, “change the test and one changes teachers’ practices” (p. 2). Likewise, many researchers assert that the context of high-stakes testing creates conflicts between what teachers believe is best practice and how they address accountability pressure in real time (Brimijoin, 2005; Abrams, Pedulla & Madaus, 2003; Paris & Urdan, 2000; Grant, 1999; Jones et al., 1999; McMillan, Myran & Workman, 1999; Herman & Golan, 1991; and Smith, 1991). However, regardless of one’s position pro or con in such a debate, it becomes apparent that teachers and their in-class practices are seen to be the central intervening factor which would determine the impact of standards-based reforms on student learning (Taylor, Shepard, Kinner & Rosenthal, 2003).
Consequently, based on the review of the literature in the area of state-mandated high-stakes testing, it is obvious that although the degree and direction of influences are ambiguous, a relationship between state testing and teachers and their beliefs and practices does exist. On the other hand, very little is known about teachers’ perceptions and practices regarding the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) in social studies. Also, there is no recent study found regarding the impact of the OGT on geography instruction in secondary schools of Ohio. Even less is known about how various factors such as educational background, school characteristics and teacher experiences might influence perceptions and practices of social studies teachers about the issues discussed. Because it has significant implications for educational leaders and policy makers, it is therefore crucial to investigate the perceptions of teachers and how they respond to changes as they are at the center of high-stakes. Therefore, in order to “reduce the conflict between testing every student and teaching every student” (Brimijoin, 2005, p. 260) in Ohio’s schools, this study is carried out with the intention of shedding some light on this ambiguous area of the existing literature. This study, therefore, will add primarily to the current literature on geography education and secondarily to the “high-stakes” testing by exploring the perceived influences of such a high-stakes testing program that Ohio’s schools face today: The Ohio Graduation Test (OGT).

Overview of the Methodology

This study was designed to explore the impact of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) on geography instruction as it was perceived by social studies teachers who are currently teaching in secondary schools of central Ohio. My interest in geography education as a social studies educator as well as the “new” phenomenon in an already
existing high-stakes testing environment in Ohio—the OGT—dictated the selection of such a topic as my dissertation study.

**Research Method**

In order to answer the central research question, this study carried out exploratory research that was designed through the utilization of quantitative methods. Among quantitative research approaches, a “survey design” was selected as it responded well to the needs and purposes for which this study was conducted. In this type of research design, the researcher administers a survey or questionnaire to a small group of people—called the *sample*—in order to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors or characteristics of a large group of people—called the *population* (Creswell, 2005). That is, from the results of a sample, we can make generalizations or claims about the whole population to which the sample belongs. As emphasized by Creswell (2005), this advantage of identifying attributes of a large population from a small group of individuals was the major reason behind the selection of such a research method.

**Sampling**

With regard to sampling, the population of this study consisted of all secondary social studies teachers who are currently teaching in the middle and high schools of central Ohio. However, here the geographic location “central Ohio” refers exclusively to Franklin County, which is the home of the greater Columbus and metropolitan area, and the other contiguous six counties (see Figure 3.1). The most important aspect of sampling is that the sample *represents* the population (Creswell, 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). For the purposes of the study, the most frequently used sampling technique was therefore chosen: *simple) random sampling*. That is, the sample was “randomly” selected so that
participants will have an equal probability of being selected from the population (Creswell, 2005), which also helps remove bias on the part of the researcher and allows the researcher to employ probability sampling techniques (Nesbary, 2000).

The school data were requested from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and received in a Microsoft Excel sheet. According to the data received from the ODE, the total number of all secondary schools in central Ohio is 326, which includes all public, private, charter and parochial schools. Of these 163 schools were randomly selected by using Microsoft Excel and then 40 schools out of 163 were removed from the sample purposely due to an insufficient number of students. That leaves a total number of 123 schools included in the study, with a student population ranging from 250 to 2,400.

*Instrumentation*

In order to collect data for this study, a cross-sectional survey instrument as a measurement device was specifically developed, pilot-tested, and administered online to a sample of social studies teachers who are currently teaching in this group of 123 randomly selected secondary schools in central Ohio. First of all, the research instrument was constructed through a “content validity” approach based on expert opinion and then it was pilot tested with 51 individuals: three professors of education, one professor of geography, one professor of statistics, three doctoral students in education, and forty-three middle and high school social studies teachers from around Franklin county. Based on the expert feedback received from the pilot study, the survey instrument was re-constructed and then administered to the research subjects via the Internet. In order to gain *access* to the population, a support letter from the Ohio Geographic Alliance (OGA) was obtained. This letter encouraged social studies teachers to participate in the study by
indicating that this study would help and further the efforts of the OGA to expand geography education across the State of Ohio.

Data Collection

Once an “exemption” was granted by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB) of The Ohio State University Research Foundation, an invitation letter on OSU letterhead, along with this support letter, was sent to social studies department chairs requesting their department’s participation. The mailing process was done twice as the second one was mailed out to the department chairs two weeks after from the first one. The form of data collection for this particular research involved creating a web-based or an Internet survey and administering it online. Prior to administration as recommended by Dillman, Smyth, & Christian (2009), the survey hosted by the web server of the College of Education and Human Ecology (EHE) at The Ohio State University was tested numerous times by using different platforms (like PC and Mac computers), connection speeds and browsers (like Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, etc.). As suggested by Nesbary (2000), the web survey included an access password provided within the invitation letter and it also was posted to a hidden directory known only to the survey administrator and respondent. For security purposes again, the web survey was also set to an automatic shut off after a 5-minute inactivity and time expiration after a 15-minute session.

Data Analysis

After the data collection period ended, the online survey was closed to access and then the data gathered from respondents were downloaded from the web server to the survey administrator’s computer as an Excel file. The data collected were first scaled and
grouped according to research questions, and then exported to and run through SPSS 16.0. Given the central research question as well as research sub-questions, in addition to the Likert type items on the questionnaire, the basic quantitative data analysis technique utilized in this study is simple descriptive statistics. Since all the variables are categorical in nature, the frequency distributions of the responses were calculated between the variables involved based on the research questions. This means that the results of the data analyses were presented through contingency tables. In addition, in order to systematically display the demographic characteristics of respondents, bar graphs as “pictures of frequency distributions” (Sirkin, 1999, p. 101) were drawn by SPSS 16.0.

Definition of Terms

The following are the key terms that most frequently appear in this study and are essential to understanding what the study is about. In fact, many of those terms are inter-related. For a better understanding of the present study, therefore, those terms may need a conceptual clarification to some extent as they may have some other meanings not intended in this study. In other words, rather than giving their dictionary meanings, I purposefully define the key terms by their operational definitions (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003), clarifying what they mean specifically for the present study.

Accountability – Accountability refers to school accountability or accountability in education as part of a national movement towards standards-based school reform. That is, the accountability movement is associated with the standards movement—“a related development that has brought together various people who wish to maintain high standards for school curricula and high expectations for the performance of all students” (Gunzenhauser, 2003, p. 53). The idea behind the school accountability is that public
education can be improved through a simple strategy: require all students to take “standardized tests” and attach “high stakes” to the tests in the forms of rewards when test scores improve and sanctions when they do not (Hamilton, Stecher, & Klein, 2002). During the past two decades, many states implemented educational accountability systems, yet the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001 (the No Child Left Behind Act) made accountability a requirement for all 50 states. In the State of Ohio, the OGT serves to meet the 10th grade assessment requirements of the NCLB.

*Geography* — Geography as discipline is “the study of spatial distributions and space relations on the Earth’s surface” (Ad Hoc Committee on Geography 1965, p. 8). In other words, geography in essence is “the study of the Earth as the home of people” (Tuan, 1991, p. 99, as cited in Kenreich, 2000).

*Geography education* — Although some scholars would argue otherwise, for the purposes of this study, geography instruction and geographic or instruction refer to the same meanings. Essentially, geography education means teaching and learning geographic concepts and skills, such as those included in *Geography for Life: National Geography Standards* (Geographic Education Standards Project (GESP), 1994).

*High school graduation exam* — Graduation exams are tests that are designed to determine if a student has retained the appropriate material (knowledge and skills) necessary in order to complete high school. Throughout the USA, many states, including Ohio, require their high school students to pass a comprehensive test to be able graduate. For instance, the OGT is a state-mandated high school graduation exam applied in the State of Ohio.
High-stakes testing – High-stakes testing in general refers to “state-mandated” standardized assessment or testing programs which are mandated by state legislatures or state boards of education for all school districts at selected grade levels carrying serious consequences for students, educators, and schools. In other words, high-stakes testing means the use of standardized testing measures as criteria for determining the quality of schools, promotion of students to the next grade, high school graduation, teacher bonuses or the governance of a school (Gunzenhauser, 2003). Like other standardized testing programs, high-stakes testing utilizes a single statewide testing instrument that is administered, scored, and interpreted similarly from district to district according to state guidelines. If there are clear sanctions (i.e., grade retention, failure to graduate, loss of funding, labeling for poor performance) or rewards (i.e., promotion to next grade, graduation, teacher bonuses, school funding) associated with test performance, the test then becomes a “high-stakes” test, such as the OGT.

Perception – Perception basically is the “interpretation of the environment” (Ormrod, 2004, p. 237), and serves as a reference point for behavior (Purkey & Novak, 1996 as cited in Peters, 2002). In this present study, perception refers to “teacher perceptions,” which means the particular beliefs teachers hold about themselves, others, and the teaching profession (Purkey & Novak, 1996 as cited in Peters, 2002). From the perceptual point of view, according to Peters (2002), one must make sense of how the person views oneself, others, and the world in order to understand human behavior. However, even though people develop perceptions that help them make sense of the world, perceptions can change over time as the person encounters new experiences (Peters, 2002). People thus modify their behavior based on their perceptions. For the
purposes of this study, through quantitative research methods, social studies teachers’ perceptions about the impact of the OGT on geography instruction as well as changes in their perceptions about the phenomenon over time will be analyzed.

_Social studies_ — “Social studies is the study of humankind from a multitude of perspectives” (Dynneson, Gross, & Berson, 2003, p. 29). Engle & Ochoa (1988) emphasize social studies as education for democratic citizenship. They define social studies at three levels: (1) social studies as the social sciences simplified for pedagogical purposes; (2) social studies as the critical study of the social sciences; and (3) social studies as the examination of social problems. Likewise, the National Council for Social Studies (1994) defines it as follows:

Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world (NCSS, 1994, p. 3).

_Standardized testing_ — Standardized testing is a “state-mandated” assessment or testing program, including standards-based tests that are typically used for high-stakes purposes. Standardized assessments have indeed been a conspicuous part of the education reform landscape throughout American history (Wang, Beckett, & Brown, 2006). For the current study, standardized testing is defined as “a large scale, externally developed and mandated, uniformly administered and scored evaluation of student learning” (Wang, Beckett, & Brown, 2006, p. 307). This means that such assessment (a) is “externally imposed by the state government; (b) assesses state-prescribed content standards; (c)
follows a uniform procedure in administering, scoring, and interpreting; (d) and the results are often used to determine rewards and sanctions for students, teachers, schools or districts” (Wang, Beckett, & Brown, 2006, p. 307). An example of this would be the OGT.

Assumptions of the Study

For the purposes of this study, in the light of the related literature, I made several assumptions at the beginning of the study. The main underlying assumption in this study is that practices of teaching and learning, like other social practices, are constructed through one’s perceptions. In this context, teachers’ perceptions affect much of what and how they do. In other words what and how teachers teach is dominated by their perceptions of the phenomenon, which is in this case the OGT. Through his research on New York’s Regents Exams, for example, Grant (1999) claims that “testing drives much of what teachers do, and so curricular and instructional change will occur if and when state tests change;” that is, “change the test and one changes teachers’ practices” (p. 2).

Within such a powerful accountability culture, perhaps, the most important assumption is the potential of such programs to change the role of the teacher and the way in which they teach. McMillan, Myran, & Workman (1999) found in Virginia that “teachers’ roles may be changing, from being a relatively autonomous, independent, creative professional, to a more mechanical and mundane dispenser of knowledge” (p. 13). In the context of Ohio, this also may result “in a less professional role in which coverage of content and scoring well on the OGT are of primary importance in influencing what is taught and how it is taught” (p. 13). That is; keeping in mind the
high-stakes carried out by the OGT, teachers unwillingly may have to adopt a “teaching to the test” philosophy (Boardman & Woodruff, 2004 & Smith, 1991).

Moreover, in today’s powerful accountability system fueled by the NCLB, the literature points out that social studies is left behind (Burroughs, Groce, & Webeck, 2005). It seems that in an integrated social studies curriculum, geography is being marginalized. An extensive literature review (Chapter 2) done for this study on geography education suggests that social studies teachers may not teach much geography as there is not a lot of room for it in the curriculum. Besides, again the related literature reveals that social studies teachers, even those who teach geography, do not have adequate educational background in geography.

In addition to the theoretical assumptions identified above, due to the quantitative nature of the study, I also take into account some other practical assumptions that could affect the validity of this study. Such as:

- All research subjects involved in the study will have an equal opportunity to participate in completion of the questionnaire.
- It is assumed for the purpose of this study that all teachers who participated in this study truthfully answered the questionnaire.
- Teachers’ perceptions about the impact of the OGT, as explored in this research, are accurate measures of their professional and individual beliefs.

Limitations of the Study

Because of the research topic studied, it is critical to understand the limitations of this study as it helps the reader make sense of the findings and implications that were
generated by the study. There are several challenges to which the present study is limited. Among them:

- This study is limited to secondary social studies teachers of Central Ohio.
- Geography is not a stand-alone subject; it is integrated into social studies as one of the five areas in Ohio’s K-12 Social Studies Academic Content Standards.
- Not every school or school district included in the study offers a geography class.
- Although there is a separate strand on geography in Ohio’s Social Studies Academic Content Standards, most geography is taught at the 5th, 6th and 7th grade levels.
- My past experience as a geography teacher could influence the lens from which the data analysis and interpretations are viewed.
- Teachers may be reluctant to take time to respond to the questionnaire; as in any survey-based study, non-response is a difficult bias challenge.
- The results from this study may not be generalized to any context outside of Central Ohio.
- There are no external funds or financial resources available to support this study.

Organization of the Study

In this first chapter, background of the study within the historical context and the significance of the stated problem including an overview of the research methodology with key terms, assumptions and limitations are provided. Chapter 2 of this study presents an extensive literature review conducted exclusively on geography education with references to the relationship between social studies and geography. This chapter also includes a supportive brief literature review on high-stakes testing due to the nature
of this current study. Chapter 3 describes in detail the procedures and research methodology employed in the study. Chapter 4 thoroughly examines and presents the results of the data collected. The final chapter presents a summary of the main research findings and a discussion of the study’s contribution to the related literature, including implications of the study and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Due to the central focus of the study as the perceived effect of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) on geography instruction in secondary schools of central Ohio, this chapter includes two corresponding literature reviews: one is on high-stakes testing and the other one is on geography education.

Literature on High-Stakes Testing

Educational researchers have always been concerned with high-stakes testing, especially its effect on teaching and learning, students and teachers. This might perhaps be evidenced by a broad literature on high-stakes or standardized testing. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the subsequent sections focus particularly on three areas of high-stakes testing literature as they directly relate to the issues discussed throughout this study: (a) high-stakes accountability, (b) testing for high school graduation and (c) the impact of high-stakes testing.

High Stakes Accountability

Today, accountability is a basic concept as well as a huge concern in American public schooling. Sirotnik & Kimball (1999) define accountability systems as neither tests nor assessments but as ways in which test data are used to assign praise or blame, distributing rewards or punishments to people and institutions—students, teachers and
schools. As a proponent of high-stakes accountability, Hess (2001) states that for accountability to have a significant impact on educational equality, “educators must be rewarded or sanctioned on the basis of student performance” (p. 4). In conjunction with such arguments, throughout the last decade, policymakers have been pushing harder for increased accountability as a method of reforming the American education system. This is especially evidenced by the “re-authorization” of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as the *No Child Left Behind*, in 2007.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* is designed to change the culture of America’s schools by closing the achievement gap, offering more flexibility, giving parents more options and teaching students based on what works. Under the Act’s accountability provisions, states must describe how they will close the achievement gap and make sure all students, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve academic proficiency. States must produce annual state and school district report cards that inform the public about both state-wide and local school progress. Schools that do not make progress must provide supplemental services, such as free tutoring and after-school programming. If such corrective actions do not effect adequate yearly progress after five years, dramatic changes to the way the school is run must be made (NCLB, 2001). In other words, under the NCLB Act, the federal government now requires states and schools districts to test more and report more, to set more ambitious improvement goals and apply sanctions more quickly to schools that do not meet these goals (Goertz & Duffy, 2003).

After a few years of its implementation, the effects of NCLB are now being felt at every corner of the United States as it expands the role of high-stakes testing by
legislating their incorporation into the states’ school accountability programs. Basically, high-stakes testing refers to “the use of standardized testing measures as criteria for determining the quality of schools, promotion of children to the next grade, high school graduation, teacher bonuses or the governance of a school” (Gunzenhauser, 2003, p. 52-53). Although policy makers and advocates of high-stakes testing claim that high-stakes testing is “scientific” and “objective” and can be a driving force behind (a positive) fundamental change within schools (Stone & Lane, 2003; Carnoy & Leob, 2002; Cizek, 2001; Hess, 2001; and Shanker, 1995), the overwhelming majority of the related literature cautions us regarding the unintended negative consequences of test results on students, teachers, and schools (Burroughs, Groce & Webeck, 2005; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Abrams, Pedulla & Madaus, 2003; Goertz & Duffy, 2003; Gulek, 2003; Gunzenhauser, 2003; Horn, 2003; Sloane & Kelly, 2003; Heubert & Hauser, 1999; Herman & Golan, 1991; and Smith, 1991).

As a result, the current emphasis on testing as a tool of education reform continues a long tradition of using tests to change pedagogical priorities and practices (Abrams & Madaus, 2003, p. 32). High-stakes testing thus became “a politically charged issue that has had a tremendous impact on the way our schools operate” (Casbarro, 2005, p. 20). Lost in those discussions, however, is an attempt to measure the associated impact of standardized assessments on teachers (Boardman & Woodruff, 2004).

*Testing for High School Graduation*

High-stakes tests and high school graduation exams are the direct outgrowth of what has come to be called the *standards movement*; they are tests “swimming in a sea of standards” (Rochford, 2004, p. 9). For most Americans, graduation from high school has
meant taking courses in math, social studies, English, science, and a number of electives to meet state requirements for Carnegie units (Bond & King, 1995); however, students in half of the states across the country face an additional challenge to earn their diploma: passing a state-mandated graduation test!

At the national Governors Association’s High School Summit of 2005, then U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings called improving the quality of high school education in America “an urgent challenge” and “a national priority” and she promoted President Bush’s High School Initiative to raise achievement levels (U.S. DEO, 2005). Today, a total of 26 states have high school graduation exams in place (Associated Press, 2005). That is, more than half of the nation’s high school students have to pass to receive a diploma.

State assessments of students’ achievement, whether or not they are graduation requirements, are part of a national movement towards standards-based school reform (Achieve, 2004; Rochford, 2004; McDermont, 2001; Bond & King, 1995). The idea behind standards-based reform is that schools will be more effective if policy makers and educators identify what children should know and be able to do at various grade levels and then redesign the educational system around these valued outcomes (McDermott, 2001). This means that improved student scores are sought not only for their own sake, but also serve as evidence that schools have aligned their curricula with state standards and are teaching all students effectively.

In the early days of standards-based reform, many states enacted graduation tests that assessed students’ grasp of basic skills. In most cases, students could take and pass these tests as early as eighth or ninth grade (McDermott, 2001). More recently, however,
the trend has been towards requiring students to reach higher levels of performance, such as mastery of material and skills identified as being at tenth-grade level (McDermott, 2001).

The current literature on the high school graduation exams not only lacks research, but also is inconclusive (Heubert & Hauser, 1999). To some (i.e., Bussert-Webb, 2003; Nathan, 2002; Jacob, 2001; and Schiller & Muller, 2000), high-stakes high school exit exams are “harbingers of doom, causing countless low income and minority students to dropout of high school,” whereas, to others (i.e., Catterall, 1989) such tests are “new and powerful tools enabling states to enforce rigorous new standards, given timely interventions, with little or no impact on the graduation rate” (Rochford, 2004, p. 1). In concert with these two positions, although the literature is mixed, what we do know with some certainty is that “far too many by the standards of the 21st Century, for an increasing number of American youth are not completing high school […] and many who do finish high school go on to college lacking the essential skills to succeed” (Rochford, 2004, p. 1-2).

To date, the most comprehensive study of state exit exams was conducted by Achieve, Inc. and titled Do Graduation Tests Measure up? A Closer Look at State High School Exit Exams (2004). This report compared exit exams from six states (including Ohio) to a variety of content descriptors. According to the Achieve, Inc. report of 2004, “while some people question the use of tests as part of states’ graduation requirements, the need for higher high school exit expectations should be clear because the cost of poor high school preparation to students and states is so clear” (p. 7). Achieve, Inc. (2004) lists the reasons why high school exit exams are important:
• While roughly three-quarters of high school graduates pursue post-secondary education within two years of earning a diploma, fewer than half ever earn a degree;

• Twenty-eight percent of those entering two- and four-year colleges immediately need a remedial English language arts or mathematics course, and half of all students take at least one remedial course during their college careers;

• More than sixty percent of employers rate high school graduates’ grammar, spelling, writing and basic math skills as only “fair” to “poor,” and the cost for one state’s employers to offer remedial English Language Arts and math was estimated at about $40 million a year.

Therefore, according to Achieve, Inc. (2004), high school exit exams:

• Allow states to set a “floor” of academic achievement for all students to ensure that they meet standards before earning a diploma;

• Provide evidence of achievement that is more comparable and aligned with standards than Carnegie units or course grades alone. Most importantly, like all high-quality, standards-based tests,

• Can help schools focus teaching and learning on essential knowledge and skills while targeting extra attention and resources to those students who need them most.

As a result, at the end of their study, Achieve, Inc. reached three conclusions. First, it is perfectly reasonable to expect high school graduates to pass these tests—they are not overly demanding. Second, these exams will need to be strengthened over time to better measure the knowledge and skills high school graduates need to succeed in the real
world. Third, states should not rely exclusively on these tests to measure everything that matters in a young person’s education.

**Impact of High-Stakes Testing**

Accountability systems are increasingly impacting the schools and the people in and around them (Sirotnik & Kimball, 1999). “High-stakes testing and the accountability movement appear to be reactions to perceptions that America’s educational system was faltering and that teachers were not doing their job” (Allington, 2002, as cited in Bussert-Webb, 2003, p. 1). Given today’s current accountability systems, teachers thus are at the center of high-stakes measures. Teachers are therefore critical of the effects of high-stakes testing on their work as it indicates that they engage in instructional practices that are inconsistent with their philosophies of education (Gunzenhauser, 2003 & Jones et al., 1999). Besides, Elmore & Fuhrman (2001) ascertain that “in most schools under the gun of high-stakes testing, teachers are working harder, spending more time, and exerting more effort preparing students for testing” (as cited in Gunzenhauser, 2003, p. 55).

There is limited research on the impact of “high stakes” testing particularly on teachers (Boardman & Woodruff, 2004; Cimbricz, 2002; and Grant, 1999/2000; Heubert & Hauser, 1999). The most-cited research in the related literature was done in the late 1980s by Smith (1991). Through extensive qualitative research about the effects of external testing on teachers, she sorted out her findings into following six categories:

1. The publication of test scores produces feelings of shame, embarrassment, guilt, and anger in teachers;

2. Beliefs about the invalidity of the test and the necessity to raise scores set up feelings of dissonance and alienation;
3. Beliefs about the emotional impact of testing on young children generate feelings of anxiety and guilt among teachers;

4. Testing programs reduce the time available for instruction;

5. The focus on material that the test covers results in a narrowing of possible curriculum and reduction of teachers’ ability to adapt, create, or diverge; and

6. Because multiple-choice testing leads to multiple-choice teaching, the methods that teachers have in their arsenal became reduced, and teaching work is deskillled.

She concluded by positing that “it is not the form of the test that generates these effects on teachers but the political and social uses made of the scores” (Smith, 1991, p. 11).

S. G. Grant—one of the leading researchers on the topic studied—conducted a series of studies, such as Grant, 1999; 2000; and 2001, regarding the effects of state-level testing on teachers of New York. In spite of the popular opinion that holds that tests drive classroom instruction, Grant argues that evidence for this opinion is thin—pointing out that relatively few empirical studies explore the relationship between teachers and tests. As a result of his extensive research on the topic, his central argument was that the available research presents a mixed picture at best. For him, while the advocates of tests as a vehicle for driving educational change tend to cite general positive effects rather than specifics with the idea in mind that good tests will inevitably drive good instruction, the critics of standardized testing are more direct in their assessments of the impact of testing on teaching (Grant, 1999). Findings of Grant (1999) suggest that there are real and important differences in the ways teachers perceive reforms across grade levels, which means that reformers cannot take a “once-size-fits-all” stance and that professional development needs to be sensitive to the differences in the perceived needs of teachers. In
addition, Grant (2000) reveals that changes in teachers’ practices need not mean improvements in those practices, warning that a sense of mistrust of the state department of education may be growing among teachers.

Jones et al (1999) surveyed North Carolina teachers on the impact of the state’s new high-stakes testing program: *The New ABCs of Public Education*. They found that especially before administration of the test, the curriculum was specifically tailored to the test at the expense of limiting and even removing the instructional time for other subjects that are not included on the test, such as social studies, science, and health. Some of the other findings were: 80% of the teachers in their study reported that they spent more than 20% of their total teaching time preparing students for the tests; more than 77% felt that their morale was lower; 76% of respondents stated that they believed that the accountability program would not improve the quality of education in their schools; and more than 76% of the responding teachers felt that their jobs were more stressful than before the ABCs program was implemented.

McMillan, Myran & Workman (1999) investigated the impact of the new Virginia statewide Standards of Learning (SOL) testing program on classroom instructional and assessment practices through surveys before and after implementation of the testing program and a longitudinal study as a follow up. The study primarily indicated that the teachers are losing their academic freedom. Both the quantitative and qualitative data support the conclusion that teachers who participated in the study changed their instruction and assessment practices, resulting “in a less professional role in which coverage of content and scoring well on standardized tests are of primary importance in influencing what is taught and how that content is taught (p. 13).
In their qualitative case study of how teachers’ professional identities position high-stakes test preparation in their classroom, Rex & Nelson (2004) uncovered that what and how teachers teach, even within powerful accountability cultures, is dominated by their own ethical senses of what they should do for their students and who they need to be as a teacher. Similarly, in their national survey of teachers’ perceptions of the impacts of state-mandated testing programs on teaching and learning, Abrams, Pedualla & Madaus (2003) discovered that while teachers reported generally positive views towards their states’ curricular standards, the state test has led them to teach in ways that “contradict their own notions of sound educational practices” (p. 6). Besides, teachers in high-stakes settings reported greatly increased instructional time devoted to tested content at the expense of non-tested content and enrichment activities. In other words, they drew attention to the fact that teachers from high-stakes states reported spending far more time than their counterparts in low-stakes states preparing students for the state test, teaching test-taking skills, and using test preparation materials and released items from the state.

A comprehensive quantitative study, done by Taylor, Shepard, Kinner & Rosenthal (2003) on the effects of standards, the Colorado Student Assessment program (CSAP), and school report cards on instruction and test-related practices reported two major negative impacts of CSAP: (1) Increased time spent on reading, writing, and math reduced or eliminated time for science and social studies; (2) Time spent preparing and practicing for CSAP was not a good use of instructional time even for the 3Rs. Similarly, as a result of their tri-state study about the impact of NCLB on social studies instruction, Burroughs, Groce & Webeck (2005) indicated that the heavy emphasis placed on the
content areas included in the NCLB, specifically reading and mathematics cut social studies out of the curriculum as it was left out of NCLB.

In addition, there is evidence that when teachers feel pressured or coerced, they put more pressure on their students to achieve at higher levels. “Although it is clearly important for teachers to encourage their students to learn well and achieve at high levels, overt pressure from teachers to improve test scores often results in decreased motivation, performance and quality of learning among student” which “leads teachers to adopt teaching strategies that focus on raising test scores rather than learning” (Paris & Urdan, 2000, p. 86). As the stakes rise, such pressure might even force teachers to attempt altering the test scores or might create a temptation to cheat (Paris & Urdan, 2000). For example, local media reported that wanting their students to do well, more teachers cheated on Ohio standardized tests than ever before (Columbus Dispatch, 2006).

George Madaus, a prominent researcher on testing, has identified seven principles that captured the intended and unintended consequences of high-stakes testing (Abrams & Madaus, 2003). In fact, those “seven principles” summarize nicely the whole literature reviewed above. Those are:

1. The power of tests to affect individuals, institutions, curriculum, or instruction is a perceptual phenomenon. Tests produce large effects if students, teachers, or administrators believe that the results are important;
2. The more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decisions, the more likely it will be to distort and corrupt the social process it is intended to monitor;
3. If important decisions are based on test results, then teachers will teach to the test;
4. In every setting where a high-stakes test operates, the exam content eventually defines the curriculum;

5. Teachers pay attention to the form of the questions of high-stakes tests (short-answer, essay, multiple-choice, and so on) and adjust their instruction accordingly;

6. When test results are the sole or even partial arbiter of future education or life choices, society treats test results as the major goal of schooling rather than as a useful but fallible indicator of achievement; and

7. A high-stakes test transfers control over the curriculum to the agency that sets or controls the exam.

Consequently, taken as a whole, the results of those studies examined in the current literature evidently show that high-stakes testing has a great impact on teaching and learning. These studies also suggest that although teachers do not believe in the value of standardized tests, the pressure on them to succeed is so great that they narrow the local curriculum standards in order to align their teaching to test objectives and spend large amounts of instructional time preparing students to take the test (Boardman & Woodfuff, 2004). However, “it is becoming increasingly clear that the anticipated goals of state testing policies are at odds with the realities of their implementation and can lead to unintended negative impacts, which are further exacerbated by high-stakes uses of test results” (Abrams, Pedulla & Madaus, 2003, p. 27). Moreover, high-stakes assessments take “control of the teaching and learning process out the hands of teachers and place it firmly in the hands of the legislature and the policy makers” (Jones et al., 1999, p. 201). To be precise, when test results are linked to rewards or sanctions, studies examined have
found that “high-stakes” testing leads to a narrowing of curricula and instruction
(Boardman & Woodfuff, 2004; Abrams & Madaus, 2003; Taylor, Shepard, Kinner &

Literature in Geography Education

For the purposes of this study, the following section thoroughly discusses the
relationship between the establishment and use of “standards” for geographic education,
at both national and state levels and the strands or themes in the history of geographic
thought. Therefore, in order to set the stage, I first look at geography as a discipline to
examine the meaning(s), traditions and trends of geography in its evolving history in the
last century. By providing a historical sketch of the geographic renaissance in American
education, I then discuss geography as a school subject with reference to (1) the national
geography standards—Geography for Life, (2) the new Ohio social studies content
standards, and (3) the integration of geography into social studies. Based on the current
literature investigated on geographic education, I point out some implications for further
work in an attempt to raise the status of school geography.

Geography as a Discipline

Geography is one of the oldest fields of academic studies. Perhaps it is almost
impossible to agree with a single definition of geography as there are as many definitions
as geographers. Yet, whatever definition we use, geography generally focuses on “the
relationship between human activity and the environment, describing and explaining the
significance of location, distance, direction, spread, and spatial succession” (Cohen,
1988, p. 248). The Science of Geography, published by the National Research Council of
the National Academy of Sciences, states, “Geography is the study of spatial distributions
and space relations on the Earth’s surface” (Ad Hoc Committee on Geography, 1965, p. 8). In other words, geography in essence is “the study of places on Earth and their relationship with each other” (NCGE, 1994).

Likewise, according to Fernald (1996), geography can be defined as “the discipline that utilizes the spatial approach to the understanding and analysis of Earth as the home of humans” and it is concerned with (1) “the location and distribution of physical and cultural phenomena” and (2) with “the spatial interaction or relationships of phenomena in place and the interaction of and between places” (p. 2). Similarly, Gregg & Leinhardt (1994) see geography as a broad discipline characterized by four concerns of nearly equal importance: (1) the “distribution” over the surface of the Earth of phenomena and processes which contribute to the unique character of places; (2) the examination of phenomena and processes in the exact “context” in which they occur, explicitly trying to understand how they are mediated by external factors that interact with them; (3) the ways that phenomena and processes are causes and consequences of human decision-making: the “human habitat;” and (4) the transmission of (spatial) information and ideas through the language of “maps” (p. 317).

In reality, geography literally means “description of the earth.” As an integrative discipline, geography brings the physical and human dimensions of the world in the study of people, places and environments. Its subject matter is Earth’s surface and the processes that shape it, the relationships between people and environments, and the connections between people and places (Geography Education Standards Project, 1994). In particular, geography focuses on the study of human society and the environment through the perspectives of place, space, and scale (Rediscovering Geography Committee, 1997).
Therefore, geography is basically defined as “the study of spatial aspects of human existence” (Geography Education Standards Project, 1994, p. 18). Hence, geographers are concerned about understanding where things are located on the surface of the Earth, why they are located where they are, and how places differ from one another—the spatial perspective; and how people interact with the environment—the ecological perspective (NCGE, 1998). Similarly, Gritzner (2002) defines geography as “the study of what, is where, why there, and why care?” (p. 39). He argues that all geographic inquiry first begins with the spatial question “Where?” Scientific analysis then asks “Why?,” and humanity’s need to know finally begs the question “Why care?” Thus, Gritzner’s definition affirms the relationship between geography’s spatial methodology, as the core of geographic analysis, and other aspects of the discipline. In sum, the terms used most often in the literature on the definition of geography have been: (1) spatial, (2) either interaction or relationship, and (3) distribution (Fernald, 1996). Therefore, geography is much more than a place-name study in identifying locations or knowing about world regions. It is a unique discipline concerned with space and place, nature and society.

History of Geographic Thought: Traditions of Geography

Over the last century, American geography has greatly changed through a lot of debates among geographers as to the definition of what constitutes the field of geography. In 1964, William Pattison attempted to provide a framework for future debates, with his paper—The Four Traditions of Geography. In his paper, Pattison (1964) identified four distinctive but affiliated traditions of geography: (1) a spatial tradition, (2) an area studies tradition, (3) a man-land tradition and (4) an earth science tradition. According to Robinson (1976), “instead of trying to produce a definition which would receive general
agreement, Pattison suggested that we should consolidate the concepts and themes of geography into those few which have been persistent throughout the development of the discipline in the past century” (p. 520). In other words, he stated that the geographer can explain the conventional divisions of the field by taking the traditions in varying combinations. For example, “human or cultural geography turns out to consist of the first three traditions [spatial, area studies, and man-land] applied to human societies; physical geography, it becomes evident, is the fourth tradition [earth science] prosecuted under constraints from the first and second [spatial and area studies] traditions” (Pattison, 1964, p. 216).

In 1974, after Pattison, Edward Taaffe joined the discussion of how geography has evolved during the 20th century. In his paper entitled “The Spatial View in Context,” Taaffe (1974) discussed the three views that occurred on the development of geographical thought in the United States: (1) the man-land view, (2) the area study view and (3) the spatial view. Taaffe presents a much more grounded and interesting perspective attempting to encompass all facets of geography with his three views. For him, there is both overlap and separateness in these three views of geography. Taaffe believed that the three traditions in geography are the basis for distinguishing the geographer’s approaches from those of other disciplines (Annenkov & Demko, 1992). For defining these three views, Taaffe developed three views of geography by utilizing three of Pattison’s four traditions, excluding the earth science tradition. According to Taaffe, the earth science tradition is truer for the United States in the history of the sub-discipline (Annenkov & Demko, 1992), and also the earth science tradition or work in physical geography is blended in the other three traditions.
Pattison (1964) claimed that *the earth science tradition* incorporates what is morally the most significant concept of the entire geographic heritage: “the earth as a unity, the single common habitat of man” (p. 215). Basically, the earth science tradition is one of the oldest approaches to geography. It is the study of the physical aspects of the earth’s surface, also known as physical geography (Robinson, 1976). Its main focus remains on the planet itself and its physical processes rather than the human impact on the planet. As Taaffe did, I think the earth science tradition could be eliminated from Pattison’s four traditions of geography during these contemporary times since it is considered to be subsumed in the other three traditions. In fact, later in a re-print of the Four Traditions of Geography, for teaching geography as a school subject in social studies, Pattison accepted the exclusion of the earth science tradition as “an intelligent respect for social studies’ purpose” (Pattison, 1990, p. 203).

*The man-land relations or ecological view*, which is one of the oldest traditions in geography, is interested in reciprocal relationships between humans and the natural environment (Taaffe, 1974). This view looks at how the environment influences human behavior and geographical patterns and visa versa—how human behavior changes the natural landscape and environment (Robinson, 1976). In other words, this view included the activities people undertook to change, control, harness, and use the earth and its resources as people around world established relationships with the natural environment. With recent developments in technology, people have increasingly taken control of many elements of their environments and converted large areas from natural to human landscapes. Therefore, this tradition has held a special place in American geography
because of heightened awareness about air and water pollution, urban blight and mismanaged land use (Marran, 1985).

The area study or regional view stresses synthesis, integration, and a concern with place. It is the study of areal differentiation or areal interrelationships (Taaffe, 1974), which is the traditional approach to the study of geography where the landscape was described (Robinson, 1976). Basically, this view involves the character of places and how those places are differentiated from one another (Marran, 1985), by making “region” an important concept. Cultural and regional studies would fall within this category. For the other traditions, area studies provides a context in which to explore local or regional scale issues, such as how culture plays a role in issues ranging from soil erosion to global climate change (Robinson, 1976). This tradition has become increasingly important with current global concerns, such as economics and politics as these topics are played out a range of cultural contexts.

The spatial view stresses maps and spatial analysis (Pattison, 1964; Taaffe, 1974). In other words, it focuses on the study of the spatial distributions of particular phenomena and involves the analysis of where things are located, why they are there, the geographical patterns that are formed, and the movement of those things (Robinson, 1976). Therefore, this view is concerned with explanation and prediction of the general rather than description and understanding of the particular. According to Taaffe (1974), one of the most significant positive aspects of the spatial view has been disciplinary overlap. Taaffe (1974) states that the “other disciplines have subfields involving the spatial expression of phenomena which clearly overlaps certain topical subfields of geography” (p. 8). For Taaffe, this tradition involves the habit of viewing phenomena on
maps, looking for patterns, and comparing new patterns with preexisting patterns so as to
detect relationships (as cited in Annenkov & Demko, 1992). In addition, as an articulate
and effective advocate for the spatial tradition of the discipline, Taaffe viewed the spatial
perspective as critical to the field’s struggle to gain recognition and acceptance as a social
science (Gauthier, 2002). Furthermore, since the writings of Pattison and Taaffe, the
spatial tradition has specifically gained momentum with the advancement of technology,
including the launch and accessibility of the World Wide Web or the Internet. The
applications of geographic information systems (GIS), remote sensing and computer
modeling have greatly increased and improved data available to geographers today,
which is why this tradition is particularly attractive at this point in time. It seems to me
that the spatial tradition rose to dominate geography, especially much of human
geography, and thus geography is becoming “the mother of spatial patterns.”

Quantitative Revolution

Geography has certainly changed over time in terms of its methodological as well
as its conceptual commitments. For example, the development of regional geography was
due to the general characterization of geography as physical, cultural and economic
descriptive analysis throughout its history. In fact, Hartshorne defined geography as
“areal differentiation or regional geography” (as quoted in Taaffe, 1974, p. 4). Therefore,
the regional tradition was perhaps the dominant one in American geography until the
1950s. However, Schaefer (1953) argued that “the regional approach is too descriptive;
therefore, geography needs to have rules and theories that apply to more than just specific
regions” (p. 227). Besides, according to Schaefer (1953), the regional tradition failed to
explain geographic patterns; because regional geography was so descriptive and
simplistic, it really did not help geographers understand why patterns were the way they were. In other words, since it provided practically no explanation, the regional approach in geography is unscientific (p. 229). As a result, in the 1950s and 1960s, Anglo-American geography underwent a quantitative revolution: the “radical transformation of spirit and purpose” following the widespread adoption of both inferential statistical techniques and abstract models and theories (Johnston et al., 2000, p. 664). In this sense, Schaefer (1953) contributed the history of geography as a science and identified “spatial relations” as the subject matter of scientific geography. For him, geography has an exceptional position as it is quite different from all the other sciences and especially it is methodologically unique. Consequently, it is believed that a systematic geography would study phenomena in terms of causal factors describable in general laws, then geography could thus formulate generalizations and laws about spatial relations (Schaefer, 1953). Likewise, Taaffe saw the quantitative analysis as a way to achieve greater precision in expression and to derive generalizations that were germane to traditional geographical problems (Gauthier, 2002).

**Geography as a School Subject**

Geography has been part of American education since the 17th century, when it was first introduced as map and globe study at Harvard (Schoenfeldt, 2001; Stoltman, 1990). It has been taught either as a stand-alone subject or as part of social studies in the K-12 curriculum in US schools over decades. Many educators and researchers defined and redefined the significance of geography in American education, and pointed out that geography has historically played a vital role in “citizenship education” in the United States (Bednarz, 2003a; Harper, 1990; Harper, 1992; James, 1990; Marran, 2003;
More than three decades ago, Preston James (1966) determined the basic issue of geography’s approach as its role in the K-12 school curriculum, which is still valid as the fundamental approach of geography to general education today (Harper, 1992). He said that “for thousands of years when something called geography has been written about or taught to young people, two quite different objectives have guided the selection of content and method: (1) “to provide an introduction to geography as a field of learning” as “there are certain kinds of questions concerning the earth that geographers ask […] that differ from the […] questions asked by scholars in other fields of knowledge” and (2) “to provide a useful image of the contemporary world as interpreted by geographers” (James, 1990, p. 219). Therefore, geography as called the “why of where” is “a powerful perspective for examining and understanding our world’s people and places” (Shearer, 2003, p. 33). In addition, Stoltman (1990) explained that geographically literate citizens are aware of (1) what is happening in the world, (2) why it is happening, and (3) how it affects other people throughout the world as well as themselves; therefore, geography is good citizenship education. Likewise, Marran (2003) outlines five reasons why geography is an essential school subject: (1) geography provides a spatial perspective for learning about the world; (2) geography describes the changing patterns of places in words, maps, and geo-graphics; (3) geography is eminently useful; (4) geography provides an effective context for lifelong learning; and (5) geography provides every student with a special opportunity to develop a personal perspective about the world that is informed by both a humanistic and scientific viewpoint. Therefore, since geographically literate students are aware of how places and problems—economic, political, cultural and environmental—are connected with them
and where they live as they have global perspective on places and issues, “a good foundation in geographic understanding will prepare students to meet the challenge of solving the multi-faceted global problems we face today” (Dulli & Goodman, 1994). As a result, this literature affirms that geography offers a unique way for students to develop the core spatial and ecological perspectives of geography and to learn a way to contribute to their community, nation, and world.

Renaissance in Geography Education

For more than a generation, geography has been badly neglected in American schools, resulting in widespread ignorance of geographic knowledge (Gritzner, 1990; Schoenfeldt, 2001). Gilbert M. Grosvenor, the President of the National Geographic Society, regrettably admitted that “In the 1970s, with two small children of my own, I became aware that we were raising a generation of geographically illiterate youngsters” (Grosvenor, 1995). Therefore, over the past few decades media and educational reports have been issued about “geographic illiteracy” that has been evident in American students (Kenreich, 2004; Murphy, 1998; Petersen et al., 1994). For example, in the International Gallup Survey of Geographic Knowledge (1988), the United States ranked seventh overall and last in the 18-to-24-year-olds among nine nations (Grosvenor, 1995). One in seven U.S. adults could not identify their own country from a world map (Schoenfeldt, 2001). Similarly, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (1994) reported the American students’ poor performance in geography, announcing a widespread geographic illiteracy across the grades (as cited in Black, 1996). In addition, the historian-led emergence of the social studies curriculum to integrate the social sciences in the early 20th century either excluded geography or limited it to map skills and
regional descriptions (Bednarz, 2002; Bettis, 1996; Murphy, 1998; Rallis & Rallis, 1995; Schoenfeldt, 2001; Stoltman, 1990). In addition, aside from geography being represented poorly in the curricula, many social studies teachers were not educated to teach geography (Bednarz, 2002; Bednarz & Bednarz, 1995; Bettis, 1996; Boehm, Brierley, & Sharma, 1994; Fernald, 1996; Gilsbach, 1997; Gritzner, 1990; Hume & Boehm, 2001; Ludwig, 1995; Morrill, Enedy, & Pontius, 1995; Murphy, 1998). Therefore, as stated by Frederick Risinger, the associate director of the ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies, geography—once a mainstay of the curriculum in the United States—almost disappeared from the K-12 curriculum in the 1960s and 1970s (as cited in Black, 1996).

As a result of this “alarming” lack of geographic knowledge on the part of American students, the United States has experienced a “renaissance” in geographic education during the past two decades (Bednarz, 2002; Bednarz, Downs, & Vender, 2003; Bettis, 1996; Gandy & Kruger, 2004; Gritzner, 1990; Grosvenor, 1995; Kenreich, 2004; Murphy, 1998; Rediscovering Geography Committee, 1997; Stoltman, 1991; Stoltman & Wardley, 1997). According to Bednarz, Downs, & Vender (2003), geographic education has seen marked improvement in three respects: (1) in its quantitative presence in schools, colleges, and universities across the U.S.; (2) in its qualitative status as a school subject within the U.S. education system; and (3) in its functional character: how it is taught—that is, its curriculum and instructional and assessment practices. As can be seen in Figure 2.1, there are many key events that framed the renaissance to improve geography education across the United States.
Figure 2.1: The progress of geographic renaissance in the United States

1. Geographic Illiteracy (1970-80)
   - National Council for Geographic Education
   - Association of American Geographers

   - National Council for Geographic Education
   - Joint Committee on Geographic Education
   - Association of American Geographers

   - National Geographic Society

   - NAEP (1994)

   - Association of American Geographers
   - American Geographical Society

   - National Geographic Society
One of the turning points of the geographic renaissance in American schools was the publication of *Guidelines for Geographic Education*, which has also been known as *The Five Themes of Geography*, by the Joint Committee on Geographic Education in 1984 (Bednarz, 2002; Bednarz & Bednarz, 2004; Bettis, 1996; Boehm & Petersen, 1994; Grosvenor, 1995; Natoli, 1994; Petersen, Natoli, & Boehm, 1994; Stoltman, 1991). For the first time in the history of the discipline, the Guidelines provided a clear content and skills framework for teaching and learning K-12 geography by structuring content around five fundamental themes: (1) location, (2) place, (3) human-environmental interactions or relationships within places, (4) movement or relationships between places, and (5) regions (Bednarz, 2002; Bettis, 1996; Boehm & Petersen, 1994; Natoli, 1994; Petersen, Natoli, & Boehm, 1994; Stoltman, 1991; Stoltman & Wardley, 1997). These five fundamental themes are complemented by the traditional concepts and structure of the discipline (Stoltman, 1991). In addition to the Guidelines’ inclusion of a scope and sequence for teaching and learning geography by grade level, the themes as the definitive outline of geographic content are also being incorporated into widely adopted geography and social studies curricula as a framework for geography studies (Bednarz, 2002; Bettis, 1996; Boehm & Petersen, 1994; Natoli, 1994; Petersen, Natoli, & Boehm, 1994; Stoltman, 1991; Stoltman & Wardley, 1997).

In addition to the creation of the Guidelines, another important factor in the progress of geography education is the development of a geography education alliance network across the United States by the National Geographic Society in 1986 (Bednarz, 2002; Bednarz, Downs, & Vender, 2003; Bettis, 1996; Dulli, 1994; Grosvenor, 1995;
Kenreich, 2004; Stoltman & Wardley, 1997). These alliances brought college and university professors together with K-12 geography teachers, supported staff-development programs, helped create new classroom materials, and worked to improve pre-service and in-service teacher training (1986 (Bednarz, 2002; Bettis, 1996; Dulli, 1994; Grosvenor, 1995; Kenreich, 2004; Stoltman & Wardley, 1997). The alliance also developed a well-trained cadre of teacher-consultants who became strong advocates of geography education in their schools and school districts as members of state curriculum and standards committees (Bednarz, 2002; Bettis, 1996; Dulli, 1994; Kenreich, 2004; Stoltman & Wardley, 1997).

Moreover, the Charlottesville Summit on national education reform, convened by the 50 state governors and the President of the United States in 1989, determined that K-12 teaching and learning should be focused on five subjects, adding geography as the 5th one (Bednarz, 2002; Bednarz, Downs, & Vender, 2003; Bednarz & Petersen, 1994; Grosvenor, 1995; Schoenfeldt, 2001; Wilbanks, 1994). This decision represented “the most significant opportunity in the history of this country for geography to move into the first rank of subjects in America’s schools” (Wilbanks, 1994, p. 115). As a result, the impact of the geographic alliances, the Guidelines, the newly created teacher-consultants, and the Summit 1989 undoubtedly raised some governors’ awareness of and appreciation for geography since geography has been included as one of the core subjects of the school curriculum in the Goals 2000: The Educate America Act of 1994 (Bednarz, 2002; Bednarz, Downs, & Vender, 2003; Bednarz & Petersen, 1994; Grosvenor, 1995; Schoenfeldt, 2001; Stoltman & Wardley, 1997; Wilbanks, 1994).
Furthermore, inclusion of geography in the National Education Goals led to the opportunity to develop a geography assessment framework for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (Bednarz, 2002; Bednarz, Downs, & Vender, 2003; Bettis, 1996; Stoltman & Wardley, 1997). Thus, a geography exam, to measure student knowledge of geography in three content areas—space and place, environment and society, and spatial dynamics and connections—was produced and administered for the first time at NAEP 1994 (Bednarz, 2002; Bednarz, Downs, & Vender, 2003; Bettis, 1996; Stoltman & Wardley, 1997) and the second time at NAEP 2001.

Finally, the creation and publication of the national geography standards, Geography for Life, in 1994 undoubtedly opened a new era for geography education in the United States (Bednarz, 2002; Bednarz, Downs, & Vender, 2003; Bettis, 1996; Grosvenor, 1995; Kenreich, 2004; Schoenfeldt, 2001; Stoltman & Wardley, 1997). Regarding this most important point in the history of geography education in the United States, Gilbert M. Grosvenor, the President of the National Geographic Society, excitedly states, “In my 41 years with the National Geographic Society, I can’t think of any day more exciting or professionally rewarding than October 20, 1994: the day the Society announced the publication of the new National Geography Standards […] It was a watershed day for geography and education—and one that I thought I would never see” (Grosvenor, 1995, p. 409).

As a result, in response to this geographic renaissance, geography education has changed significantly in American schools via a re-examination of how geography is learned and taught across all the grade levels (Bednarz, Downs, & Vender, 2003; Marran, 1994). Therefore, if geography is to be perceived as an essential school subject in
preparing students for citizenship as adults, not only must its image change, but its content and the pedagogy that delivers it must be modified as well (Marran, 1994) in order to effect a shift from the ‘old’ school geography to a ‘new’ school geography (see Figure 2.2). Consequently, the “new” geography revealed in the standards emphasizes the essential nature of the discipline as an integrated and systematic approach to the places, people, and environments of the world (Marran, 1994).

Figure 2.2: Old geography versus new geography (Based on Marran, 1994)
With the publication of *Geography for Life: National Geography Standards*, the year of 1994 became “an exiting time in history to be a geographer” (Nellis, 1995, p. 302). The National Geography Standards (NGS) were produced under the sponsorship of the four major geography organizations: the American Geographical Society, the Association of American Geographers, the National Council for Geographic Education and the National Geographic Society. This is important because these standards are a *consensus* statement for not only the people interested in geography, but also the major players in geography education.

The National Geography Standards was a response to the 1994 “Goals 2000: Educate America Act.” The third of those National Education Goals states, “By the year 2000, all students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including [...] geography” (as cited in GESP, 1994, p. 4). The release of NGS clearly redefined the needs of students in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century:

The purpose of standards for geography is to bring all students up to internationally competitive levels to meet the demands of a new age and a different world. For the United States to maintain leadership and prosper in the twenty-first century, the education system must be tailored to the needs of productive and responsible citizenship in the global economy (p. 9).

In addition, the ultimate goal of the national geography standards is simply “to create a geographically informed person, someone who understands people, places and environments from a spatial perspective, someone who appreciates the interdependent worlds in which we all live” (GESP, 1994, p. 26-28). Furthermore, as the title implies,
geography standards are intended for life: “lifelong, life-sustaining, and life-enhancing” (p. 11) in terms of commitment and purpose. Thus, geography matters to people’s lives as it is empowering in practical contexts and enriching in that it helps us to understand our personal experiences (GESP, 1994).

Moreover, the standards are the key to geography education as it represents a consensus on what constitutes a world-class education in geography for all Americans (see Figure 2.3). In essence, the National Geography Standards are a definition of what students should know and be able to do in geography at the conclusion of grades four, eight and twelve (Bettis, 1996; Bednarz, 2002; Bednarz, Downs, & Vender, 2003; Boehm & Boehm, 1994; De Souza, 1994; Dulli & Goodman, 1994; Marran, 1995; Nellis, 1995). According to the standards, as can be seen in Figure 2.3, geography education in the United States K-12 is composed of three interrelated and inseparable components: (1) subject matter, (2) geographic skills, and (3) perspectives from which to view the world. The subject matter is a distillation of essential knowledge and is the foundation for the standards (De Souza, 1994). Parallel to the nature of geography, the subject matter is divided into six subdivisions: (1) the world in spatial terms, (2) places and regions, (3) physical systems, (4) human systems, (5) environment and society and (6) the uses of geography. Yet, subject matter is useful when geographic skills and perspectives are brought to bear. These skills include asking geographic questions, acquiring geographic information, organizing geographic information and analyzing geographic information, and answering geographic questions. The major two perspectives are the spatial and the environmental, with two complementary perspectives: the historical and the economic perspectives.
As can be seen in Table 2.1, the subject matter is organized into two levels. At the first level, geography is divided into six essential elements: (1) the world in spatial terms, (2) places and regions, (3) physical systems, (4) human systems, (5) environment and society, and (6) the uses of geography. At the second level, each essential element contains a number of geography standards, each of which contains a set of related ideas and approaches to the subject matter of geography, with a total of eighteen standards (see Table 2.1). Each of the eighteen standards explains exactly what the student should know and understand after completing grade levels four, eight, and twelve. The standards also
provide an explanation of the importance of geography, examples and illustrations of geographic concepts and achievement level narratives.

Furthermore, in terms of geographic skills, there are obviously “strong connections with the familiar five themes of geography that were outlined in the 1984 Guidelines for Geographic Education; in other words, the standards offer one more step along a path that many teachers have been following for years” (Downs, 1993, p. 3). However, unlike the fundamental five themes, the national standards were meant to offer comprehensive coverage of geography content and to challenge students and teachers to meet a world-class benchmark (Bednarz, 2002). In other words, although the standards are not all-inclusive, they do define the most important elements of geography. The eighteen content standards communicate what is relevant and what is important in geography (De Souza, 1994) when we think of the historical traditions and themes of geography. Therefore, the national standards provide students with a geographic perspective for looking at Earth as the home of humans (Nellis, 1995). According to Downs (1994),

The geography standards make a strong statement for the need to recapture physical geography from the earth sciences curriculum, to rescue human geography from the social studies curriculum, to restore the connections between nature and society, and to recognize the central role of geographic representations in problem solving across curriculum. The geography standards make explicit links to history and implicit connections to science, mathematics, reading, and the social sciences (as cited in Nellis, 1995, p. 303).

As a result, the standards re-emphasized physical geography—which was often virtually ignored within the social studies departments—introduced the concept of systems theory as a method of teaching complex concepts and relationships; promoted the use of spatial technologies, such as GIS and remote sensing; supported field work; and encouraged
doing geography, rather than studying geography (Bednarz, 2002; Bednarz, Downs, & Vender, 2003).

However, since the standards now exist, one might ask how they affect educational policy, geography content, and classroom practice (Bednarz, 2003b). Unfortunately, little research regarding the implementation of the national geography standards has been conducted. Three studies found to date pointed out that geography standard at the state level indicated an uneven quality and connection with the Standards (Bednarz, 2003b; Boehm & Rutherford, 2004; Munroe & Smith, 1998). According to Bednarz (2003b), while the four external factors (authority, power, prescriptiveness, and consistency) influence teachers’ decisions to implement the standards, internal cognitive issues of teachers’ misconceptions, perceptions, prior knowledge and experiences play a vital role in how they come to interpret and understand the nature (form) and intent (function) of the standards. In addition, Gandy & Kruger (2004) concluded that there is relationship between the implementation of the national geography standards and three independent variables, including (1) pre-service training, (2) in-service training (geography institutes and workshops, and (3) number of minutes per week geography is taught. Moreover, a study conducted by Martin (1997) on the examination of middle and high school social studies textbooks available nationwide found no evidence of standards-based student expectations (as cited in Bednarz, Downs, & Vender, 2003). Therefore, even though the standards were well received by geography educators and widely distributed, their impact has not been thoroughly studied nor have they had the impact that geography educators hoped for (Bednarz, 2002; Bednarz, 2003b; Boehm & Rutherford, 2004; Munroe & Smith, 1998). This situation clearly calls for geography
teachers to further the research on the discussion and critical evaluation of the quality and utility of the national geography standards.

The second NAEP in geography was administered in 2001. In both the NAEP 1994 and 2001 geography assessments, student knowledge of geography was measured in three content areas: space and place, environment and society, and spatial dynamics and connections. The results for each grade—fourth, eighth, and twelfth—were reported according to three achievement levels: Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. The NAEP 2001 geography assessment showed that only 21 percent of fourth-graders, 30 percent of eighth-graders, and 25 percent of twelfth-graders performed at or above the Proficient level for their respective grades, whereas 26 percent of fourth graders, 26 percent of eighth graders, and 29 percent of twelfth graders failed to reach the Basic level. Likewise, based on the NAEP 1994 and 2001 results, according to Stoltman (2002), “while student performance in geography since 1994 has generally improved, a large proportion of students in 2001 did not reach either the Basic or Proficient levels and did not demonstrate achievement in the essential content and skills in geography” (p. 4). Therefore, “although more teachers believe they are very prepared to teach geography, and students at the eighth and twelfth grades are taking more geography courses, student performance remains low” (Stoltman, 2002, p. 4).
I. The World in Spatial Terms

Geography studies relationships between people, places, and environments by mapping information about them into a spatial context.

*The geographically informed person knows and understands:*

1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools and technologies to acquire process and report information from a spatial perspective.
2. How to use mental maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context.
3. How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth’s surface.

II. Places and Regions

The identities and lives of individuals and peoples are rooted in particular places in those human constructs called regions.

*The geographically informed person knows and understands:*

4. The physical and human characteristics of places.
5. That people create regions to interpret Earth’s complexity.
6. Low culture and experience influence people’s perceptions of places and regions

III. Physical Systems

Physical processes shape Earth’s surface and interact with plant and animal life to create, sustain and modify ecosystems.

*The geographically informed person knows and understands:*

7. The physical processes that shape the patterns of Earth’s surface.
8. The characteristics and spatial distribution of ecosystems on Earth’s surface.

IV. Human Systems

People are central to geography in that human activities help shape Earth’s surface, human settlements and structures are part of Earth’s surface and humans compete for control of Earth’s surface.

*The geographically informed person knows and understands:*

9. The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human population on Earth’s surface.
10. The characteristics, distribution and complexity of Earth’s cultural mosaics.
11. The patterns and networks of economic interdependence on Earth’s surface.
12. The processes, patterns and functions of human settlement.

Table 2.1: Geography for Life: National Geography Standards 1994

( Geography Education Standards Project, 1994, p. 36-37)
Table 2.1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V. Environment and Society</th>
<th>The physical environment is modified by human activities, largely as a consequence of the ways in which human societies value and use Earth’s natural resources, and human activities are also influenced by Earth’s physical features and processes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **The geographically informed person knows and understands:** | 14. How human actions modify the physical environment.  
15. How physical systems affect human systems.  
16. The changes that occur in meaning, use, distribution and importance of resources. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VI. The Uses of Geography</th>
<th>Knowledge of geography enables people to develop an understanding of the relationships between people, places, and environments over time—that is, of Earth as it was, is, and might be.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **The geographically informed person knows and understands:** | 17. How to apply geography to interpret the past.  
18. How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future. |
New Ohio State Standards for the Social Studies

In 1994, the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) published the national social studies standards, which included ten themes that serve as organizing strands for the social studies curriculum at every school level (NCSS, 1994):

1. Culture,
2. Time, Continuity, and Change,
3. People, Places, and Environments,
4. Individual Development and Identity,
5. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions,
6. Power, Authority, and Governance,
7. Production, Distribution, and Consumption,
8. Science, Technology, and Society,
9. Global Connections,

While the eighth—Science, Technology, and Society—and ninth—Global Connections—of the national social studies standards undoubtedly promote geography as a discipline in the social studies, geography is strongly evident in the social studies standards only in the third standard, People, Places, and Environments. However, “little attention was paid to aligning the national geography content standards to assessment protocols or to the manners in which the standards might work their way into social studies curriculum frameworks across the U.S.” (Rutherford & Boehm, 2004, p. 232). Thus, the presence of the ten themes and their related standards in the social studies, exist simultaneously with standards for the individual subjects that comprise social studies, which creates a
potential for confusion (Rutherford & Boehm, 2004). Therefore, geographers should be interested in the degree to which the subject matter, skills, and perspectives contained in Geography for Life have been incorporated into state standards (Bednarz, 1998). Despite the significant progress, the national geography standards have not yet been translated into state standards and into school districts and into classroom practice nationwide (Bednarz, Downs, Vender, 2003). Hence, it is clear that if the national geography standards are to be implemented, it will be on a state-by-state basis and not a result of any national initiative (Bednarz, 1998). However, in spite of the difficulties in researching state standards, limited research found that the implementation of the national geography standards into the state-level geography standards seems to be uneven in quality and connection with the Standards (Bednarz, 2003b; Boehm & Rutherford, 2004; Munroe & Smith, 1998). Therefore, although the development of state standards to improve geography education is good news and looks promising, Bednarz (1998) reminds us that “geography educators must ask analytical questions, questions which focus on the kinds of standards in place, whether they require students to know and be able to do geography at the levels specified in Geography for Life, and whether they will produce what the profession has defined as a geographically informed person” (p. 84).

Upon the publication and release of Geography for Life—the national geography standards—in 1994, the adoption of these standards for social studies curricula by states across the United States has been voluntary. As was expected, states have revised their curricula to move to the standards-based education (Bednarz, Downs, & Vender, 2003). Accordingly, the number of states with geography standards has been increasing steadily. For example, according to recent data collected by the National Geographic Society, 48
states plus the District of Columbia now have geography standards in place, 37 of which are based on the National Geography Standards; however, only 13 states require a geography course as a requirement for high school graduation (NAEP, 2002). Moreover, in 27 states geography is not tested in mandated state examinations, while in some other states the portion of mandated tests devoted to geography is very small (NAEP, 2002). Thus, there could be little incentive for teachers to emphasize geography instruction when higher stakes are attached to other subjects (Munroe, & Smith, 1998).

The State of Ohio unanimously adopted “new” social studies content standards for all grades (K-12) in December 2002. The basic philosophy of Ohio’s academic content standards for social studies is the belief that “effective social studies integrates history, geography, economics, political science, other social sciences and humanities in order to prepare students to be participating citizens” (ODE, 2002, p. 24). Thus, social studies became an integrated subject in schools. Ohio’s social studies content standards serve as a basis for what all students should know and be able to do by the time they graduate from high school. The social studies content standards are intended to provide a set of clear and rigorous expectations for all students. Ohio’s social studies content standards consist of seven standards, which clearly define a balanced program of knowledge and skills necessary for active citizenship (ODE, 2002):

1. History
2. People in Societies
3. Geography
4. Economics
5. Government
6. Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities

7. Social Studies Skills and Methods

In Ohio’s K-12 social studies, students learn knowledge and skills from each of these seven standards at every grade, but the content emphasis varies from grade to grade. For example, the emphasis on geography is greatest in grades five and six and the emphasis on history is greatest in grades seven through ten.

Unlike Ohio’s previous *Model Competency Based Program*, the new Ohio social studies content standards includes a separate strand on geography. Yet, geography is not seen as a stand-alone subject; rather, it is taught within an interdisciplinary curriculum alongside history and other social sciences. Principally, the goal of the geography strand in the new Ohio social studies content standards is to have students “be able to use knowledge of geographic locations, patterns and processes to show the interrelationship between the physical environment and human activity, and to explain the interactions that occur in an increasingly interdependent world” (ODE, 2002, p. 12). Moreover, the new Ohio social studies content standards largely use the national social studies standards as their framework with respect to other individual subjects that comprise the social studies curriculum, such as history and geography. While the first (*Culture*, referring to People in Societies), second (*Time, Continuity and Change*, referring to History) and seventh (*Production, Distribution, and Consumption*, referring to Economics) are partially addressed, the third (*People, Places, and Environments*, referring Geography), eighth (*Science, Technology, and Society*) and ninth (*Global Connections*) of the national social studies standards are primarily addressed in the geography strand of the new Ohio social studies content standards. As identified in the “social studies curricular model” of
Bednarz, Downs, & Vender (2003), geography thus becomes a part of the integrated social studies taught across grade levels by “sharing time in a crowded curriculum with history, economics, political science, and other social sciences” (p. 468).

Grades five—*Geography of North America*—and six—*World Geography*—in Ohio’s integrated K-12 social studies curricula focus particularly on geography as a school subject. Yet, it also seems that the explicit teaching of geography is confined with the grades five and six, which might eventually cause a possible disappearance of geography in the high school. The basic themes around which the geography strand is organized across the grade levels are *Location, Places and Regions, Human Environmental Interaction, Movement and Application of Geography*. The teaching of geography in the Ohio K-12 social studies curriculum progresses from simple to complex, such as home, community, state, nation, and world. While the early grades (K-5) focus on the introduction of basic geographic concepts, map skills and geography of North America, the middle grades (6-8) center around the themes like location, place, regions, human and environment interaction, movement and world geography. Hence, the upper grades (9-12) focus on identifying and analyzing patterns and processes of geographic knowledge and application of geographic knowledge to life. As a result, it is clear that the new Ohio social studies standards cover geography as a complete and discrete discipline. The content of geography in the new Ohio social studies standards is explicitly organized based on the elements, skills, and perspectives of *Geography for Life*. 
Integration of Geography into the Social Studies

The progressive movement in education earlier in this century has resulted in experimentation with an integrated K-12 school curriculum (Diem, 1996; Schug & Cross, 1998). Thus, integration of the various school subjects has been a trend in curriculum and instruction (Alleman & Brophy, 1993; Diem, 1996; Kaltsounis, 1990; Schug & Cross, 1998). This is especially true for social studies, although it is becoming less emphasized as the standards-based reform gains ground (Howard, 2003). Although there are various forms or types of integrated/interdisciplinary approaches to instruction (Diem, 1996), John Dewey states that if the integrated curriculum emphasizes the teaching of subject matter as being related, subject matter areas then lose boundaries and borders completely (as cited in Marlow, 1994). In other words, true integration in the curriculum reflects the fact that there are connections and overlaps among subject matters with no rigid boundaries, tying together many currently separated disciplines (Forsyth, 1992). Even though the use of an integrated interdisciplinary approach is not a panacea for all the problems that social studies faces, it provides a successful alternative to the lockstep secondary curriculum (Diem, 1996). Similarly, viewing integration as a desirable curriculum feature, Alleman & Brophy (1993) state that integration is generally pictured as a viable response to the problems of content balance and as a way to save time and make for natural, holistic learning. However, Schug & Cross (1998) caution that the costs of curriculum integration are high, real and certain whereas the benefits of integration are low, vague, and difficult to measure.

In 1992, the National Council for the Social Studies adopted a truly interdisciplinary definition of social studies that included the broad sweep of disciplines
from which to build an effective social studies curriculum (Blanchard, Senesh, & Patterson-Black, 1999), urging high levels of curriculum integration (Diem, 1996; Schug & Cross, 1998). In this sense, NCSS defines social studies as an integrated field of study:

Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world (NCSS, 1994, p. 3).

Thus, the national social studies curriculum standards developed by NCSS are aimed at the unifying focus required for broad-based citizenship education (Blanchard et al., 1999; Schneider, 1993), by evidently emphasizing the field as multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary in nature. Besides, by choosing the ten themes such as Time Continuity, and Change, rather than History, and People, Places, and Environments, rather than Geography, “the NCSS sent the message that its standards play down separate social studies disciplines and play up curriculum integration” (Schug & Cross, 1998, p. 54).

Similarly, the new Ohio social studies standards state that “effective social studies integrates history, geography, economics, political science, other social sciences and humanities in order to prepare students to be participating citizens” (ODE, 2002, p. 24). In response to this statement, the geography strand in the new Ohio social studies framework aims at having students “be able to use knowledge of geographic locations, patterns and processes to show the interrelationship between the physical environment and human activity, and to explain the interactions that occur in an increasingly interdependent world” (ODE, 2002, p. 12). As a result, it is evident that making
connections across disciplines in the social studies is critical for students; hence, both the national social studies standards and new Ohio social studies standards clearly point out a need for a search for integration in social studies (Schneider, 1993). However, curriculum integration in social studies is a daunting task (Schug & Cross, 1998). By using the social studies standards as an “umbrella” with the more discipline-specific standards as strands in an integrated and cumulative program of social studies (Blanchard et al., 1999), social studies can be used as the catalyst for curriculum integration (Diem, 1996) whereas geography as a school subject can be effectively integrated into social studies for a meaningful understanding of social studies as a whole.

In addition, the interaction of geography with other disciplines has deep historical roots. In fact, geography historically plays an integrating and synthesizing role among both the natural and social sciences as it has roots in both and across disciplines (Annenkov & Demko, 1992; Taaffe, 1974). In other words, geography deals with the subject of other disciplines as a holistic set of spatial processes as society interacts with the environment and each alters the other (Annenkov & Demko, 1992). Moreover, Taaffe (1974) points out an interdisciplinary approach across disciplines since geography is a remarkably diverse discipline. He states that the “other disciplines have subfields involving the spatial expression of phenomena which clearly overlaps certain topical subfields of geography” (Taaffe, 1974, p. 8). In other words, geography also shares an interface with all other social sciences, such as historical geography vs. history, economic geography vs. economics, cultural geography vs. anthropology, social geography vs. sociology, population geography vs. demography and behavioral geography vs. psychology (Gritzner, 1990). Likewise, Geography for Life defines geography as an
integrative discipline as geography brings the physical and human dimensions of the world in the study of people, places and environments (Geography Education Standards Project, 1994). Thus, since geography and geographers have a dual experience in the social and natural sciences (Taaffe, 1974). This view obviously stresses the special role of geography as a spatial analysis, and geographer as a spatial analyst of phenomena. Therefore, geography employs a spatial methodology, asking “what is where, why, and what of it?” in terms of the varied physical and human features of the earth’s surface (Gritzner, 1990). Consequently, as a broad and integrative subject matter, geography can lead students to a better knowledge of themselves and their place in the world through a geographic, spatial perspective that is unavailable elsewhere in the curriculum (Gregg & Leinhardt, 1994).

Moreover, in some respects, the educational goals of geography and social studies are strikingly similar as both fields are connected in many ways. For example, both geography and social studies attempt to impart a sense of time, place and direction in order to help students acquire the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes essential to individual fulfillment and productive citizenship (Gritzner, 1990). Thus, without a strong support of the geography component of a curriculum, social studies lacks the foundation of space and place, a framework of humans relating to their environment, and the coverage of global perspectives that are essential building blocks of social learning; whereas, without a strongly focused social studies curriculum, geography founders as a classroom subject (Gritzner, 1990). Therefore, both reasoning in and with geography are valuable tools for students to cultivate (Gregg & Leinhardt, 1994). For example, using tools of spatial analysis to understand the influence of physical and environmental factors
on culture or reasoning about the interaction of geographic factors with history, students learn to appreciate the complexity of their world as they apply geographic insights to other subject matters (Gregg & Leinhardt, 1994).

Furthermore, since geography has roots in both natural and social sciences, it thus seems that geography has infinite potential for integration into social studies and across the curriculum. However, the geographic perspective is not strongly represented in modern social studies (Bednarz, 1997). Instead, formal integration is placed within the sequential study of history even though the social studies framework recommends the infusion of geography at all grade levels (Rocca, 1994). Yet, history and geography, in fact, complements each other in way that they could be best taught together within the social studies curriculum (Bednarz, 1997; Rossi, 1999). This also means that one cannot teach history without geography (Bednarz, 1997). Therefore, we are ignoring an important part of history if we do not include geography as part of our teaching repertoire (Bednarz, 1997), because the geographic perspective can enrich the study of history by helping to explain historical and contemporary events through the spatial perspective (Bednarz, 1997; Rossi, 1999). Thus, social studies teachers should use spatial perspectives in all history lessons; without them, the events of history lack ties to real places on earth (Rocca, 1994). Similarly, Parker (1991) argued that the social studies curriculum in the U.S. would be strengthened by integrating geographic concepts within world history studies (as cited in Rocca, 1994). In addition to this, Becker (1990) concluded that geographic interpretation is also critical to global education and to contemporary global studies (as cited in Rocca, 1994). As a result, Bednarz, Downs, & Vender (2003) conclude that the partnership between history and geography is
strengthened with the assumption that students need to understand (1) “the nature of change in places as well as over time, (2) everything takes place in a geographic context, and (3) that how humans perceive their geographic context plays a vital role in history” (p. 467).

Consequently, the result of integrating geography with another subject area should be like “the healthy offspring of two strong parents and not a mutant hybrid” (Forsyth, 1992, p. 323). Geography can be used as a “linkage” that facilitates an integrated curriculum approach, in which the geography of an area provides the central core for the study. Because geographic linkage is a reasonable, inexpensive, and functional way to increase geographic knowledge and awareness, integrating geography with other subjects in the curriculum also helps to achieve expectations for the creation of a geographically literate society as outlined in Geography for Life, placing greater emphasis upon geography in the school curriculum (Dowd, 1990). This also provides students with geographic skills and knowledge as a routine part of daily instructions (Dowd, 1990); because, geography reminds us how interwoven geographic concepts are in individuals’ lives (Fitzhugh, 1994). After all, geography is for life.

Conclusion

If geography is to remain an academic discipline as well as an essential school subject, we as professional geographers and geography educators should have a consensus on that there are indeed some common themes as well as purposes in our work. Therefore, I think the three traditions—the spatial view, the area study view, and the ecological view—have become a functional framework in discussing the content and purposes of geography as a discipline. When we ask ourselves whether the traditions of
geography are still suitable in terms of current trends in geography in the United States, it seems they are very much alive today. For instance, we can see them as the basis for a course on geography as a discipline, required for all geography majors at the universities while geography education materials still use them today (Donaldson, 2001). In fact, as discussed throughout this chapter, the National Geography Standards (1994) as well as the Five Themes of Geography (1984) are breakdown of these fundamental ideas—traditions—of geography into smaller and often more specific units (Donaldson, 2001). For example, the “Spatial Tradition” respectively includes the first theme “Location” of the Five Themes of Geography and the first element “The World in Spatial Terms” of the National Geography Standards. Therefore, as put by Robinson (1964), “despite the changes, trends, and narrowing focus of interests in geography, the four traditions seem to provide an effective structure for describing the philosophy of our discipline” (p. 530). They particularly remain consistent with the present geographical considerations today. Thus, since its publication in 1994, the National Geography Standards, Geography for Life, has been helping move geography into the U.S. educational consciousness in a way that had not been achieved before.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study was designed to explore the impact of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) on geography instruction as it was perceived by Ohio’s middle and high school social studies teachers. My interest in geography education as a social studies educator as well as the “new” phenomenon in an already existing high-stakes testing environment in Ohio—the OGT—dictated my selection of such a dissertation study.

It is clear that under the pressure of educational accountability specifically put forward by the NCLB Act of 2001, districts and schools that place great value on the results of statewide assessments (i.e., the OGT) have the potential to influence strongly how teachers approach and carry out instruction (Boardman & Woodruff, 2004). A literature review specifically done for this study confirms that, even though there is a body of research conducted on high-stakes testing, there is limited empirical research found on the impact of such testing on teachers (Grant, 1999; Boardman & Woodruff, 2004). In addition, to date, there is no research found on the effects of the OGT with a specific focus on geography instruction. This study, therefore, extends the related literature on high stakes testing and sheds some light on a non-existent topic in the
current literature by exploring the perspectives of secondary social studies teachers in central Ohio regarding the effects of the OGT on geography instruction.

This chapter describes in detail the steps taken to conduct the current research. Therefore, after re-stating the major research question as well as research sub-questions, I provide a methodical outline for the research design including the selection of the population and sample, data collection, construction of the survey instrument, validity of the survey and pilot study, and data analysis.

Statement of the Research Question

As stated in first chapter, the current study primarily focused on the following major research question:

From the perspectives of social studies teachers in secondary schools of central Ohio, what has been the effect of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) on geography instruction?

Sub-questions for the research include:

1. The research literature in general indicates that high stakes testing has had an impact on the amount of time teachers spend with their subjects in the curriculum. How has the time devoted to teaching geography changed since the implementation of the OGT?

2. In what ways, if any, have the curriculum and the instructional strategies used by social studies teachers who are teaching geography changed due to the implementation of the OGT?
3. How has the use of teaching materials changed due to the implementation of the OGT?

4. How has the emphasis of particular geographic concepts/topics changed following the implementation of the OGT?

5. What are the teachers’ perceptions about geography and the impact of the OGT on teaching and learning?

Research Methods

In general, there are two main research approaches to educational research: quantitative and qualitative methods. In *quantitative research*, the researcher decides what to study; asks specific, narrow questions; collects numerical data from participants; analyzes these numbers using statistics; and conducts the inquiry in a presumably unbiased, objective manner (Creswell, 2005). In *qualitative research*, whereas, the researcher relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting largely of words or text from participants; describes and analyzes these words for themes, and conducts the inquiry in a subjective manner (Creswell, 2005).

Educational researchers usually apply one or both of these research methods depending on the purpose and questions studied.

For the purposes of this study, an exploratory quantitative method was chosen. Therefore, this is a quantitative, non-experimental design that utilizes descriptive statistics. This research is non-experimental because there is no treatment or intervention and there are no experimental or control groups. Thus, this study is only an “exploratory” study aimed at exploring how social studies teachers perceive the impact of the OGT on geography instruction in secondary schools of central Ohio.
In order to answer the research questions for this study, it seemed that the selection of a quantitative research method would be more appropriate for the intentions carried out for the study. Among quantitative research approaches, the methodology I chose to utilize is a “survey design” in which the researcher administers a survey or questionnaire to a small group of people—called the sample—in order to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors or characteristics of a large group of people—called the population (Creswell, 2005). That is, from the results of a sample, we can make generalizations or claims about the whole population to which the sample belongs. As emphasized by Creswell (2005), this advantage of identifying attributes of a large population from a small group of individuals was the major reason behind the selection of such a research method. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2003), another important advantage of surveys or questionnaires is that they can be mailed or given to large numbers of people at the same time, which makes the data collection faster and easier. On the other hand, the main disadvantage is that the respondents have no chance to get an instant clarification about seemingly unclear questions as well as no chance to react verbally to a question of particular interest or importance (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003). In order to overcome this disadvantage of such a survey design or at least to keep it minimal, the data collection instrument, a cross-sectional survey or questionnaire, was thoroughly tested by secondary social studies teachers for its clarity and whether or not it asks accurately and exactly what it is intended.
Sampling

The research site of this study is defined as all the secondary schools of central Ohio. For this study, central Ohio refers to Franklin County, the home of the greater Columbus metropolitan area, and the other contiguous 6 counties: Delaware, Fairfield, Licking, Madison, Pickaway and Union (see Figure 3.1). The population for this study, therefore, came from the larger population of all secondary schools currently operating in central Ohio. In other words, the target population to whom I wish to apply my findings for this study consists of all middle and high school social studies teachers who are currently teaching in central Ohio.

For a quantitative research study, one of the primary strengths of sampling is that accurate estimates of a population’s characteristics can be obtained by surveying a small portion of the population (Creswell, 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Yet, there are several ways to select a sample from the entire population of interest. Each strategy used for selecting a sample has strengths and weaknesses. The most important aspect of sampling is that the sample represents the population (Creswell, 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Therefore, for the purposes of the study, I have chosen the most frequently used sampling technique: (simple) random sampling. That is, the sample was “randomly” selected so that participants will have an equal probability of being selected from the population (Creswell, 2005). For this reason, through such a randomization method, a representative sample from a population provides the ability to generalize to a population. Random sampling also helps remove bias on the part of the researcher and allows the researcher to employ probability sampling techniques (Nesbary, 2000). Hence, this study utilized a two-stage sampling design. In the first stage, 163 schools from the
central Ohio school list were selected randomly. In the second stage, 40 schools out of 163 were purposely removed from the sample due to a very small student body. The second stage of the sampling procedure could thus be considered as convenience sampling, referring to a sampling method in which the sample is, as the name implies, conveniently available for the study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003).

The school data were requested from the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and received in a Microsoft Excel sheet, which is also a public record readily provided on their website. According to the data received from the ODE, the total number of all secondary schools in central Ohio is 326, which includes all public, private, charter and parochial schools. Of these 163 schools were randomly selected by using Microsoft Excel. In an effort to make data collection more effective and easier, these randomly selected schools were grouped by their student populations. The number of students enrolled in those schools ranged from lows near 60 to highs near 2,400. Therefore, those schools with a student population less than 250, a total of 40 schools, were then excluded from the study. That leaves a total number of 123 schools included in the study, of which 80 schools have a student population ranging from 250 to 500. In other words, the total number of schools with a student population over 500 is only 43. The reason for excluding those 40 schools is that schools having a student body less than 250 will most likely have only one social studies teacher according to expert opinion based on the student-teacher ratio. In detail, there are 62 high schools, 40 middle schools, 16 elementary and/or intermediate schools with grades 6 through 8, and 5 other (mostly virtual) schools located in 7 counties of central Ohio. Figure 3.1 below presents a map from where the sample for this study was drawn. According to the ODE, the total number
of secondary social studies teachers including all middle, junior high, and high school teachers in all public, private, charter, and parochial schools of central Ohio—as defined in this study (see Figure 3.1)—is 981.

Figure 3.1: Research population map showing the counties of central Ohio included in the study
Data Collection

In order to collect data for this study, a cross-sectional survey instrument as a measurement device was developed, pilot-tested, and administered online to a randomly selected sample of secondary social studies teachers who are currently teaching in central Ohio.

In the beginning of the research, in fact, the related literature was searched for data collection or instrumentation purposes. Since there is no similar research and/or applicable instrument found in the existing literature, I thus decided to develop a quantitative “questionnaire,” which is a subject-completed data collection instrument (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). In other words, as the data collection method, I developed a survey instrument that was specifically designed for the study (see Appendix D for the survey instrument). To be precise, the data collection instrument was a “cross-sectional survey,” which is the most popular form of survey design used in education in which the researcher collects data at one single point in time (Creswell, 2005).

The research instrument was constructed through a “content validity” approach, which is “the extent to which the questions on the instrument and the scores from these questions are representative of all the possible questions that a researcher could ask about the content or skills” (Creswell, 2005, p. 164-165). Therefore, in order to establish the content validity of the instrument prior to administration, the survey was pilot tested with 51 individuals: three professors of education, one professor of geography, one professor of statistics, three doctoral students in education, and forty-three middle and high school social studies teachers from around Franklin county, of which twenty-nine were public school teachers, nine private/parochial school teachers, and five charter school teachers.
Based on the expert feedback received from the pilot study, the survey instrument was reconstructed and then administered to the research subjects.

In order to gain access to the population of social studies teachers of all secondary schools in central Ohio, I asked two related institutions—Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and Ohio Geographic Alliance (OGA)—to allow me access to their data regarding secondary social studies and/or geography teachers. I also negotiated access to the population through these two institutions by asking them to provide me with a support letter which was to go along the invitation letter. Therefore, since these institutions are recognized by the entire population of interest, the sample population would likely value their request to participate in the study by completing the survey. However, I was informed by the Ohio Department of Education that the ODE no longer provides such a support letter for research carried out by individuals. Yet, I was able to obtain a letter from the Ohio Geographic Alliance (OGA) as the current study premised findings that would help and further the efforts of the OGA to expand geography education across the State of Ohio (see Appendix B for the OGA support letter).

The basic strategy followed to minimize the non-response rate—as it was one of the disadvantages of mail (in this case online) surveys—was to reach social studies department chairs in those randomly selected schools by mail and to ask their participation in the study (see Appendix A for the recruitment letter). The selection of social studies department chairs as the primary contact for survey invitation was essential because it was assumed that social studies teachers would see their department chairs as an authoritative figure and would thus likely value more their request to participate in completing the survey online. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2003), in school-based
surveys, a higher response rate can be obtained if a questionnaire is sent to persons in authority to administer to the potential respondents rather than sending it to the respondents themselves. The mailing process was done twice. The second one was mailed out to the department chairs two weeks after the first. As clearly stated in the invitation letter, no incentives were given to increase the participation rate, but participants, if they wished, were given an opportunity to learn about the results of the study by contacting me via email. To make the survey look more official and thus eye-catching, the invitation letter was sent to the department chairs on OSU letterhead along with an explanatory cover sheet and an OGA support letter emphasizing the importance of the study (see Appendix A and B). Also, purposefully using the term “Ohio Graduation Test” as the heading of the survey would catch the attention of teachers as the OGT is one of the major challenges they face today. As a result, the OSU letterhead, OGA support letter and the use of the OGT as the heading of the survey seemed to help in receiving a relatively good return rate especially during such a very busy time of the school year.

The letter sent out to the department chairs clearly stated the procedures in detail for executing the research with an explanation of the purpose of the research, why the study is important and why they should participate; instructions for completing the survey online; and an assurance of confidentiality. In fact, to be able to conduct this research, prior to administration of the survey instrument I first filed an “exemption” which was granted by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB) of The Ohio State University Research Foundation (see Appendix C). As indicated in the cover letter, the participants were clearly given a promise that their confidentiality would be strictly kept;
and there was no question in the survey that asked the identification of the research subjects, except the school name to keep track of the participant schools.

The form of data collection for this particular research involved creating a web-based or an internet survey and administering it online or via the Internet. The survey was hosted by the web server of the College of Education and Human Ecology (EHE) at The Ohio State University. Prior to survey administration online, as indicated by Dillman, Smyth, & Christian (2009), the survey was tested numerous times by using different platforms (such as PC and Mac computers), connection speeds and browsers (like Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, etc.). The database was also tested to ensure that items were collected and coded correctly. When the complete survey was posted online, the sample population was then invited to participate by mail. As emphasized in the invitation letter, the department chairs were urged to encourage their social studies teachers first to go to the given link—hosting the survey in the cyber space of OSU—second to access to the survey by typing in the survey ID given and third to fill out the survey. Additionally, the survey stayed online during the time period of data collection from mid April until mid June.

Internet-based surveys are fairly new in the related literature; however, due to time and cost effectiveness, faster data availability and convenience, they are becoming quite popular (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009; Nesbary, 2000). According to Dillman, Smyth, & Christian (2009), besides their vast advantages, there are serious concerns regarding the use of Internet-based surveys, such as inappropriate selection of sample, access to the respondents’ email addresses, lack of Internet and computer skills of the respondents, lack of Internet coverage or access to the Internet, and lack of
security. Yet, most of these concerns do not automatically apply to this survey because this is not an entirely Internet-based survey as the Internet is used only as a host for the survey instrument itself. It is also assumed that all schools selected randomly for the study have Internet access and that the teachers have computer and Internet skills and the ability to access a webpage and take the survey online. On the other hand, in order to overcome the security issue with Internet surveys as well as to prevent non-selected respondents from taking the survey, as suggested by Nesbary (2000), the web survey included an access password provided within the invitation letter and the web survey was posted to a hidden directory known only to the survey administrator and respondent. For security purposes again, the web survey was also set to an automatic shut off after a 5-minute period of inactivity and a time expiration after a 15-minute session.

Once the data collection period ended, the online survey was then closed to access. The online survey software embedded in the web server of the EHE had the capability to capture and store the data gathered from respondents as well as the capability to be downloaded from the web server to the survey administrator’s computer as an Excel or SPSS file. Once the data were gathered and captured in SPSS 16.0, the latest version of the statistical analysis software, then the statistical analysis of the data began.

Data Analysis

In this study, data were gathered by using a survey tool based on a Likert-type scale to elicit responses from the research subjects. Likert-type survey instruments are widely used in educational research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Clason & Dormody, 1994; and Sisson & Stocker, 1989). This type of questionnaire generally has response
categories designed to elicit agreement or disagreement about a particular topic under investigation (Sisson & Stocker, 1989). For instance, if we wanted to know whether the same population is different on several measures, as in the case of this study, Likert-type items then generate the data we need (Oppenheim, 1992).

The data collection tool for this study consisted of a 28-item survey instrument. The survey questions, other than those either asking demographic or general information, are Likert-type items. The instrument scale was constructed through the usual five-point degree of agreement either from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree or Highly Decreased to Highly Increased with a Neutral or Remained About The Same option.

In general, instruments that are developed by using Likert-type scales usually yield higher reliability when measuring people’s perceptions and attitudes because of the greater range of answers that respondents are permitted to choose from (Oppenheim, 1992). However, this type of scale was criticized as they do not offer metric or interval measures, in addition to the most serious criticism being its lack of reproducibility (Oppenheim, 1992). On the other hand, besides their relative ease of construction, the major advantage of a Likert-type scale is its ability to provide precise information about respondents’ degree of agreement or disagreement (Oppenheim, 1992).

Likert-type data may be analyzed in more than one way. A commonly used data analysis method with Likert-type items, which generally produces categorical data, is descriptive statistics (Clason & Dormody, 1994). Some statisticians believe that the chi-square test is a correct way to analyze Likert-type data (Sisson & Stocker, 1989). Yet, here the point is not a question of right and wrong ways to analyze data from Likert-type items, but is instead a more direct way to answer the research questions meaningfully. If
the distribution within the group is important, as in this case, the contingency table would probably be the most useful (Sisson & Stocker, 1989).

Given the central research question as well as research sub-questions, the basic quantitative data analysis technique utilized in this study was descriptive statistics, which simply help describe what the large quantitative data set shows (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Therefore, the quantitative data captured in the host web server were first downloaded into an Excel file and then scaled and grouped according to research questions. The data were next exported to and run through SPSS 16.0. In this final stage of the analysis, the appropriate statistical strategy necessary to ascertain the existence or not of a relation of variables involved were used. In this case, since all the variables are categorical in nature, the frequency distributions of the responses were calculated between the variables involved based on the research questions. This means that the results of the data analyses were presented through contingency tables. Contingency tables or cross tabulation basically refers to a table depicting a relationship between the independent and dependent variable through frequency counts and/or percentages (Sirkin, 1999). Furthermore, in order to systematically display the demographic characteristics of respondents, bar graphs as “pictures of frequency distributions” (Sirkin, 1999, p. 101) were drawn by SPSS 16.0.

Time Schedule

February 2008: Submit complete research proposal to adviser and the doctoral committee for approval.

March 2008: Request permission from The Ohio State University to begin data collection.
March 2008: Obtain Institutional Review Board approval from The Ohio State University.

April 2008: Send invitations to department chairs and administer the survey to social studies teachers in secondary schools of central Ohio.

May 2008: Send out a second invitation after two weeks pass from the first one.

June 2008: Finish data collection.

June 2008: Begin to analyze the data.

September 2008: Begin to write the results.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the results of the quantitative data analysis, which used categorical data gathered through an online survey instrument administered to social studies teachers in randomly selected secondary schools of central Ohio. All of the data were analyzed by using SPSS 16.0 for Windows. The data collected online were downloaded into SPSS from the web server which was hosted by the College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University.

The quantitative data analysis of the study employed descriptive statistics, which were utilized first to illustrate the general characteristics of the data or of the research subjects—secondary social studies teachers in central Ohio—and then tables and figures were constructed to present the results of the analyses based on the research questions.

The main purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of social studies teachers regarding the impact of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) on geography instruction in secondary schools of central Ohio. The following is the major research question:
From the perspectives of social studies teachers in secondary schools of central Ohio, what has been the effect of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) on geography instruction?

In order to report the results of the quantitative data analysis, this chapter is organized around the research sub-questions. Namely, the following sub-titles are in fact the research sub-questions. Therefore, this chapter taken as a whole addresses the central research question for the study. Depending upon the research sub-question examined, the results presented were divided into either two or three main categories: middle school versus high school or Grades 6-8 (Middle School), Grades 9-10 (when the OGT is administered) and Grades 11-12. This partition is necessary because being a social studies teacher at the middle or high school level considerably differentiates the responses given to the research questionnaire. In reality, middle school teachers are away from and thus less affected by the OGT; yet, they are the ones who basically deliver the geography instruction in the general framework of the social studies curricula. On the other hand, high school teachers, specifically those who are teaching the tenth grade, are at the core of the OGT; but, they do not necessarily teach geography.

Before starting to present the results of the data analysis question by question, I first begin with an introductory section titled “Background Information.” This section is basically intended to display the necessary demographic characteristics of the research subjects—secondary social studies teachers who are currently teaching in central Ohio. This helps the reader see the general picture for a better interpretation of the research results.
Background Information

This section displays the demographic characteristics of the research subjects which include gender, race/ethnicity, place of work, school setting, school SES, OGT scores, grade level, teaching license, degree, experience, geography coursework, and courses taught. A related demographic profile of the participants in the survey is examined below (see Tables 4.1-4.12 and Figures 4.1-4.12).

<p>| Gender | Middle School | | High School | | Total | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>100</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. For all tables in this chapter, percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number; therefore, the total percentage varies from base 100. n = number of counts or frequencies.

Table 4.1: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages for Central Ohio Social Studies Teachers’ Gender

Table 4.1 shows the percentages of social studies teachers by gender and compares them by school or grade level. Overall, as depicted in Figure 4.1 below, more than half of the social studies teachers are male while less than half are female. When we look at the numbers and percentages by school level, there is a notable difference between the number of middle and high school teachers. Specifically, at the high school level more than three-fourths of the social studies teachers are male while over half of the middle school teachers are female. This substantial difference may represent the preferred school choices of females and males as work places. This might mean that while mostly
females prefer to be a middle school teacher, male teachers prefer to work at a high school.

![Bar graph of social studies teachers' gender](image)

**Figure 4.1: A bar graph of social studies teachers’ gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$n$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.2: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages for Race/Ethnicity of Central Ohio Social Studies Teachers**
As can be seen in Table 4.2, nearly all social studies teachers responding to the survey identified themselves as White (see Figure 4.2 below for a depiction). There is no important difference between middle and high school teachers in terms of race/ethnicity. It seems that percentages of African American teachers are much lower than expected, which is only four percent. One percent of respondents identify as Other. The remaining one percent reported themselves as Asian American. This is probably due to the type of the school setting from which the data was gathered. That is, mostly suburban—sixty four percent of the schools are in suburban settings (see Table 4.4). The “Other” includes a Scottish American and an Irish American.

![Figure 4.2: A bar graph of social studies teachers’ race/ethnicity](image)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of Work</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th></th>
<th>High School</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public School</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parochial School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter School</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: No one reported being in any private non-parochial school.*

Table 4.3: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages for Central Ohio Social Studies Teachers’ Primary Place of Work

Table 4.3 shows that a vast majority of central Ohio social studies teachers work in public schools (see Figure 4.3 below). Although a little over one-tenth of the social studies teachers teach in parochial schools, only a fraction is employed in a charter school. By school level, nearly all of the middle school teachers work in public schools while exactly three quarters of the high school teachers work in public schools.
According to Table 4.4, the majority of social studies teachers who responded to the survey teach in a suburban school district. A relatively low but equal percentage remains in urban and rural districts. The setting for one percent is classified as ‘Other.’
This might be related to the number or percentage of parochial schools included in the study—which are mostly located in suburban school districts—or simply that those teachers who are from suburban school districts showed greater interest in responding to the research questionnaire (see Figure 4.4 below for a representation).

Figure 4.4: A bar graph of social studies teachers’ school setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School SES</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th></th>
<th>High School</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$n$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly High SES</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly Middle SES</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly low SES</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages for School SES of Central Ohio Social Studies Teachers
Table 4.5 reveals that central Ohio social studies teachers who participated in the study teach students who are mostly from middle class families (see Figure 4.5 for a portrayal). While one-fifth of the students have higher socio-economic status (SES), less than one-fifth comes from a lower SES. There is some difference between middle and high school levels regarding their report on the percentage of lower SES students. The percentage of students in the middle and higher SES groups are close to each other.

Figure 4.5: A bar graph of social studies teachers’ school SES
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OGT Scores</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Average</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages of the OGT Scores for Central Ohio Social Studies Teachers’ Schools

As provided in Table 4.6, the majority of the reported OGT scores are above average with a great discrepancy between the middle and high schools represented in the study. Almost three quarters of the high school teachers assert that their schools’ OGT score is above average (as can be seen in Figure 4.6), leaving only a small number with below average scores. However, slightly over half of the middle school teachers believe that their school district’s OGT score is above average. This might be due to the fact that middle schools do not take the OGT. Therefore, unlike high school teachers, in the survey instrument middle school teachers were asked to provide an estimate of their school districts’ OGT score in general, not their schools’.
Figure 4.6: A bar graph of the OGT scores for social studies teachers’ schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>324(^a)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)For this particular item, the total number exceeds the number of respondents because they were allowed to select each grade level currently taught.

Table 4.7: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages for Central Ohio Social Studies Teachers’ Grade Level(s) Currently Taught
As can be seen in table 4.7, tenth grade teachers have the greatest representation among the respondents. This could reflect the fact that they are more interested in responding to such a survey about the OGT because the OGT is administered in 10th grade. In other words, as shown in Figure 4.7, the people who are most concerned with responding to the survey are likely to be tenth grade teachers because they are the ones who administer the OGT. In addition, sixth grade teachers have the lowest participation rate, which could validate the previous point in that their interest is least because they are furthest from the OGT. Tenth grade teachers demonstrate the highest participation rate, suggesting that they feel the “high-stakes” nature of the test.

Figure 4.7: A bar graph of social studies teachers’ grade levels currently taught
As shown in Table 4.8, almost two-thirds of the social studies teachers who participated in the study are licensed to teach in comprehensive social studies, which is the licensure area that the majority of the teachers across grades hold (see Figure 4.8 for a representation). That is particularly true for high school teachers as more than three-quarters have this type of licensure. Interestingly, those who are licensed specifically in geography remain very low: only two percent, which was relatively less than expected. Also, the “Other” licensure area comprises sociology and psychology.
Figure 4.8: A bar graph of social studies teachers’ licensure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Completed</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.9: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages for Central Ohio Social Studies Teachers’ Highest Academic Degree Completed
Table 4.9 demonstrates that nearly three-quarters of the social studies teachers have earned a master’s degree (see Figure 4.9 for a clearer picture). This probably reflects the State of Ohio’s requirement that public school teachers earn a master’s degree within five years once they begin to work.

Figure 4.9: A bar graph of social studies teachers’ highest degree completed
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 or more</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.10: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages for Central Ohio Social Studies Teachers’ Number of Years of Teaching

Table 4.10 indicates that nearly one in five social studies teachers has less than five years of teaching experience; whereas, more than one quarter of the social studies teachers have been teaching for more than twenty years (see Figure 4.10 for an illustration). However, the number of middle school teachers with more than twenty years of teaching experience is nearly double the number of high school teachers with the same experience.
Figure 4.10: A bar graph of social studies teachers’ experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Courses</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 or more</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.11: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages for Central Ohio Social Studies Teachers’ Number of College-Level Geography Courses Taken
Table 4.11 displays the number and percentages of college-level geography courses social studies teacher have taken. It shows a very similar pattern between middle and high school teachers. In total, half of the teachers have completed only one or two courses in geography while one in ten teachers had six or more geography courses. As shown in the bar graph below, the ratio in general is notably higher than expected. This might mean that those teachers with a higher interest in geography responded to the survey, which was also confirmed by emails and final notes from participants.

Figure 4.11: A bar graph of social studies teachers’ number of college level geography courses taken
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses Taught</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th></th>
<th>High School</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. History</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World History</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Studies</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>161</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The total number of courses taught by social studies teachers far exceeds the total number of respondents because they were permitted to mark all subjects they currently teach.

Table 4.12: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages for Courses Currently Taught by Central Ohio Social Studies Teachers

As provided in Table 4.12, the distribution of social studies related courses currently taught in central Ohio’s secondary schools reveals that U.S. History and World History are the most frequently taught subjects by social studies teachers. The table above also points out a considerable result regarding the number of geography courses taught (see Figure 4.12). However, these courses are taught at the middle school where geography evidently is given more space than it is in the high school curriculum.

Responses for the “Other” category, especially at the high school level, are social studies related “electives.” This category included Social Studies, Humanities, Ancient History, Psychology, Philosophy, Political Science, Current Events, Holocaust and OGT Social Studies.
Figure 4.12: A bar graph of social studies teachers’ courses currently taught

Research Sub-Question 1:

The research literature in general indicates that high stakes testing has had an impact on the amount of time teachers spend with their subjects in the curriculum. How has the time devoted to teaching geography changed since the implementation of the OGT?

This section addresses whether teachers perceive a change in the amount of time that is spent teaching geography due to the implementation of the OGT.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Devoted to Teaching Geography</th>
<th>Grades 6-8</th>
<th>Grades 9-10</th>
<th>Grades 11-12</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remained About the Same</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.13: *Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages for Time Devoted to Teaching Geography*

Table 4.13 indicates that even though nearly half of the middle school social studies teachers think that the time devoted to teaching geography has not changed due to the OGT, percentages of those who believe the time has increased and those who believed it has decreased are almost equal in total. However, although over one third of the high school social studies teachers believe that there is no change in the time devoted to teaching geography due to the OGT, almost half of the high school social studies teachers—unlike middle school teachers—think that the time devoted to teaching geography decreased following the OGT. Overall, well above two thirds of the social studies teachers either saw a decrease or no change in the time devoted to teaching geography due to the OGT.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Studies Content Areas in the OGT</th>
<th>Rank Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in Societies</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies Skills and Methods</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.14: Ranking Order of Social Studies Content Areas Based on Their Emphasis on the OGT

As can be seen in Table 4.14, history was indentified as the “number one” social studies subject on the OGT based on the emphasis placed on it by both middle and high school teachers. Geography was ranked the “last” in terms of its emphasis on the OGT. This clearly gives an idea about the level of importance placed on the teaching of geography in the social studies curriculum.
Average Time Spent on Teaching Geography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grades 6-8</th>
<th></th>
<th>Grades 9-10</th>
<th></th>
<th>Grades 11-12</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6% - 10%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11% - 15%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16% - 20%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21% - 25%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 25%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. For this particular question, teachers were asked what percentage of their instructional time in a quarter—nine weeks—on average they spend on teaching geography and/or related content skills in the classroom.

Table 4.15: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages for Average Time Spent on Teaching Geography in a Quarter (Nine Weeks)

Table 4.15 above indicates the average time spent on teaching geography and/or related content and skills that social studies teachers teach in a quarter—nine weeks—in the classroom. According to the table above, in total, nearly one in three teachers points out a low percentage of their instructional time, less than five percent in a quarter, is spent on teaching geography and/or related content and skills. The amount of time spent on geography in middle and high schools differs greatly. For example, while only thirteen percent of the middle school teachers allocate less than five percent of their instructional time in a quarter for geography, nearly half of the high school teachers use the same amount of time to teach geography. Unlike the middle school teachers, none of the high school teachers even responded to the fifth (21 percent – 25 percent) and sixth (Over 25 percent) categories as their amount of time in which they teach geography and related content and skills. Moreover, more than half of the teachers in Grades 11-12 spend less
than five percent of their instructional time in a quarter by teaching geography related content and 84 percent of teachers in Grades 9-10 spend less than 10% of their instructional time teaching geography. As indicated in the Ohio Social Studies Content Standards and supported by the literature, this could mean that geography in K-12 social studies curriculum is taught in the middle school, leaving not much space for geography in the high school curriculum.

Table 4.16 below presents the perspectives of the secondary social studies teachers on changes in the amount of time allocated for particular curriculum items regarding testing and the OGT. Nearly three quarters of middle and high school social studies teachers in total apparently agree that the time spent on instruction in areas tested by the OGT and problems that are likely to appear on the OGT have increased. On the other hand, according to more than half of the teachers, the time allocated for instruction in areas not covered by the OGT is decreased. This is evidence of “teaching to the test.”

Moreover, it is interesting to see differences in responses given by teachers in Grades 9-10 vs. 11-12. For instance, in comparison to the 11th – 12th grade teachers, the 9th – 10th grade teachers noticeably emphasize more that the instruction in areas tested on the OGT has increased while the instruction in areas not covered by the OGT decreased. Likewise, the overwhelming majority of the 9th – 10th grade teachers stress that instruction about problems that are likely to appear on the OGT has increased.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum Items</th>
<th>Grades 6-8</th>
<th>Grades 9-10</th>
<th>Grades 11-12</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction in Areas Tested by the OGT</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction in Areas Not Covered by the OGT</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems that are Likely to Appear on the OGT</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** D = Decreased; S = Remained About the Same; I = Increased

Table 4.16: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages of Change in the Amount of Time Allocated for Particular Curriculum Items Following the OGT
Research Sub-Question 2:

In what ways, if any, have the curriculum and the instructional strategies used by social studies teachers who are teaching geography changed due to the implementation of the OGT?

This section focuses on whether or not there is a change in such classroom practices as curriculum, activities, skills and assessments used by social studies teachers due to the implementation of the OGT.

Table 4.17 below indicates the responses of the secondary social studies teachers on changes in the amount of time allocated for assessments in their classroom following the OGT. Overall, they report not much change in the amount of time for four out of six types of assessments they utilize in their classroom, including objective questions (multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blanks, true-false, etc.), performance assessments (debates, portfolios, experiments, etc.), group work yielding an individual product and group work yielding a group product. Among those, however, the use of objective questions were reported to have increased by almost one quarter of all teachers, even though the majority said otherwise. Moreover, short answer and extended response-essay types of assessments are noticeably reported to show an increase following the OGT. Responses at the middle and high school levels are moderately similar.
| Assessments Types | Grades 6-8 | | | Grades 9-10 | | | | Grades 11-12 | | | | Total |
|-------------------|-----------|---|---|-----------|---|---|-----------|---|---|---|---|
|                   | D         | S | I | D         | S | I | D         | S | I | D | S | I |
| Objective Questions (Multiple-Choice, Fill-in-the-Blanks, etc.) | n | 12 | 58 | 22 | 4 | 48 | 36 | 0 | 16 | 10 | 16 | 122 | 68 |
|                   | %        | 13 | 63 | 24 | 5 | 54 | 41 | 0 | 61 | 39 | 8 | 60 | 32 |
| Short Answers     | n        | 4  | 10 | 78 | 2  | 24 | 62 | 0  | 10 | 16 | 6  | 44 | 156 |
|                   | %        | 4  | 11 | 85 | 2  | 27 | 71 | 0  | 39 | 61 | 3  | 21 | 76 |
| Extended Response-Essay | n | 4  | 14 | 74 | 4  | 32 | 52 | 2  | 14 | 10 | 10 | 60 | 136 |
|                   | %        | 4  | 15 | 81 | 5  | 36 | 59 | 8  | 54 | 38 | 5  | 30 | 65 |
| Performance Assessments (Debates, Portfolios, etc.) | n | 24 | 42 | 26 | 28 | 46 | 14 | 2  | 22 | 22 | 54 | 110 | 42 |
|                   | %        | 26 | 46 | 28 | 32 | 52 | 16 | 8  | 84 | 8  | 26 | 54 | 20 |
| Group Work with Individual Product | n | 22 | 46 | 24 | 24 | 42 | 22 | 4  | 20 | 2  | 50 | 108 | 48 |
|                   | %        | 24 | 50 | 26 | 27 | 48 | 25 | 15 | 77 | 8  | 24 | 53 | 23 |
| Group Work with Group Product | n | 22 | 42 | 28 | 28 | 38 | 22 | 4  | 20 | 2  | 54 | 100 | 52 |
|                   | %        | 24 | 46 | 30 | 32 | 43 | 25 | 15 | 77 | 8  | 26 | 49 | 25 |

*Note.* D = Decreased; S = Remained About the Same; I = Increased

Table 4.17: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages of Change in the Amount of Time Allocated for In-Class Assessments Following the OGT
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Grades 6-8</th>
<th>Grades 9-10</th>
<th>Grades 11-12</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing (Short-Response, Essays, etc.)</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept Development Using Manipulatives or Experiments</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Seat Work</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole Group Instruction</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Working Together in Small Groups (Coop. Learning)</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Enrichment Activities</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulations</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications to Real Life</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
<td>n D S I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: D = Decreased; S = Remained About the Same; I = Increased

Table 4.18: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages of Change in the Amount of Time Allocated for In-Class Activities Following the OGT
Secondary social studies teachers also reflected on their responses on whether time allocated for particular in-class activities following the OGT has changed, as shown in Table 4.18 above. A majority of the teachers stated that there is not much change in time spent on most of these in-class activities due to the OGT. The only activity that experienced a notable change in the amount of time in the classroom following the OGT was practice of writing (short answer, essays), which was reported as increased by nearly three quarters of teachers surveyed. This finding was consistent with the findings of assessments as reported in Table 4.17.

According to Table 4.19 below, approximately half of the secondary social studies teachers stated that their use of time to raise students’ basic skills and research skills in the classroom has remained about the same whereas more than one third of the teachers claimed that there has been an increase. Furthermore, more than half of the social studies teachers participated in the survey acknowledged that they spent more time in developing students’ critical thinking skills since the onset of the OGT. Results for the most part did not show a considerable amount of difference across grade or school levels.
Table 4.19: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages of Change in the Amount of Time Allocated for Skills Following the OGT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Grades 6-8</th>
<th>Grades 9-10</th>
<th>Grades 11-12</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Skills</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Skills</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking Skills</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. D = Decreased; S = Remained About the Same; I = Increased*
Research Sub-Question 3:

How has the use of teaching materials changed due to the implementation of the OGT?

This section examines whether or not there is a change in the use of teaching materials and/or resources used by social studies teachers due to the implementation of the OGT. Table 4.20 below displays whether or not there is a change in the use of particular teaching resources in the social studies classroom. It is obvious that middle and high school teachers provided different responses on the use of teaching resources in their classrooms. A majority of the high school teachers reported not much change for most of the resources they use. Whereas the time allocated for using e-mails and websites, Ohio K-12 social studies academic content standards, and teacher generated activities were increased. The time used for field trips, personal travels, and student experiences were decreased. While nearly a half of the high school teachers indicated no time change in teacher generated activities, the other half says otherwise.

Unlike high school teachers, middle school teachers mostly pointed out an increase in some of the resources they use. These resources include additional books, maps, globes, atlases and outline maps, teacher generated activities and Ohio K-12 social studies academic content standards. Possibly, it is because they are the ones who teach geography, since the middle school social studies curriculum—unlike the high school social studies curriculum—is the major place where Ohio students have the opportunity to receive some geography instruction.
Additionally, responses between the 9th – 10th and 11th – 12th grade teachers are somewhat different. Specifically, the majority of 11th – 12th grade teachers clearly indicated an increase in use of the following resources: newspapers and magazines (Current Events); computer programs, games and CD-ROM’s; and teacher generated activities. Because the OGT is administered in the 10th grade, this result might imply that 11th – 12th grade teachers could have more flexibility in using their instructional time in their classroom without restrictions from the OGT.

Moreover, middle and high school teachers agreed on the frequency of only four of the twelve resources following the OGT by indicating not much instructional time change, textbooks; films, videos, and DVD’s; five themes of geography; and national geography standards. However, for an additional and a clearer picture about five themes of geography and national geography standards as resources, see Tables 4.23 and 4.24.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Grades 6-8</th>
<th>Grades 9-10</th>
<th>Grades 11-12</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Books</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maps, Globes, Atlases, and Outline Maps</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers, and Magazines (Current Events)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Films, Videos, and DVD’s</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Programs, Games, and CD-ROM's</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Mails, and Websites</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Generated Activities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.20: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages of Change in the Use of Teaching Resources Following the OGT

(Continued)
Table 4.20 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Grades 6-8</th>
<th>Grades 9-10</th>
<th>Grades 11-12</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D  S  I</td>
<td>D  S  I</td>
<td>D  S  I</td>
<td>D  S  I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Trips, Personal Travels, and Student Experiences</td>
<td>n 48 40 4</td>
<td>40 40 8</td>
<td>14 10 2</td>
<td>102 90 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 52 44 4</td>
<td>45 45 9</td>
<td>54 38 8</td>
<td>50 43 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio K-12 Social Studies Academic Content Standards</td>
<td>n 0 24 68</td>
<td>0 30 58</td>
<td>0 12 14</td>
<td>0 66 140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 0 26 74</td>
<td>0 34 66</td>
<td>0 46 54</td>
<td>0 32 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five Themes of Geography</td>
<td>n 16 44 32</td>
<td>26 46 16</td>
<td>8 16 2</td>
<td>50 106 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 17 48 35</td>
<td>30 52 18</td>
<td>31 61 8</td>
<td>24 52 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Geography Standards</td>
<td>n 14 54 24</td>
<td>22 56 10</td>
<td>6 20 0</td>
<td>42 130 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 15 49 26</td>
<td>25 64 11</td>
<td>23 77 0</td>
<td>20 63 17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. D = Decreased; S = Remained About the Same; I = Increased*
Research Sub-Question 4:

How has the emphasis of particular geographic concepts/topics changed following the implementation of the OGT?

This section concentrates on whether or not there is change in the emphasis of particular geographic concepts/topics following the implementation of the OGT. Table 4.21 below shows the status of change in geography content in the social studies classroom. As was the case in evaluating time spent using particular resources, middle and high school teachers again provided differing responses about teaching key geography topics/concepts in their classrooms. Interestingly, most high school teachers reported not much change in geography content following the OGT; yet, there are differences by grade level. However, forty percent of the responses identify an increase for three particular geography topics or concepts—culture, movement (transportation; immigration) and resources (trades; economics)—and a decrease only for teaching landforms. In fact, 9th – 10th grade teachers reported more increase regarding these particular topics, which have been seen more frequently on the OGT.

In addition, none of the middle school teachers reported a decrease in any geography content. That is, in most cases they pointed out an increase in time spent for all of the geography content. This should again be related to the weight of geography content in the high school social studies curriculum because the middle school was the primary place for geography instruction as outlined in the new Ohio K-12 Social Studies Academic Content Standards. However, even if so, this might raise a question about their allocation of instructional time in their classroom given an increase in any topic/concept they teach.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics/Concepts</th>
<th>Grades 6-8</th>
<th>Grades 9-10</th>
<th>Grades 11-12</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maps (Map Skills and/or Reading)</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location (Longitude and Latitude)</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places (Physical and Human Characteristics of Places)</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (Demographics)</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement (Transportation; Immigration)</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources (Trades; Economics)</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.21: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages of Change in Geography Content Following the OGT
Table 4.21 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics/Concepts</th>
<th>Grades 6-8</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Grades 9-10</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Grades 11-12</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human-Environment Interaction</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landforms</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regions (Ohio, Midwest,</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US/North America, and World)</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application or Geography in</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. D = Decreased; S = Remained About the Same; I = Increased
Research Sub-Question 5:

What are the teachers’ perceptions about geography and the impact of the OGT on teaching and learning?

This last section of the data analysis thoroughly examines the perspectives of secondary social studies teachers on geography and the OGT. Since the teachers’ perspectives examined are broad, this section is divided into five sub-sections.

**Teachers’ Perceptions about Teaching Geography**

Table 4.22 below discloses secondary social studies teachers’ perspectives on particular statements about geography. Nearly all teachers think that geography is an important subject in the school curriculum. Well over eighty percent of the teachers believe that their ability to teach geography and/or related concepts and skills are good. In addition, again over eighty percent of them feel confident in their content knowledge of geography. These statements positively correlate with their background knowledge as most of them are geographically literate social studies teachers as can be seen in Table 4.11 above.
Table 4.22: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages of Social Studies Teachers’ Statements about Geography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements About Geography</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think geography is an <em>important</em> subject in the school curriculum</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My <em>ability to teach</em> geography and/or related concepts and skills are good</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am <em>confident</em> in my <em>content knowledge</em> of geography</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree*
Teachers’ Perceptions about Their Familiarity with and Incorporation of Selected Curricular Resources

Social studies teachers’ responses regarding their familiarity with particular publications on social studies and geography education, such as the Ohio Academic Content Standards for K-12 Social Studies, the Five Themes of Geography, and the National Geography Standards, are provided in Table 4.23 below. As was expected, most of the teachers apparently are very familiar with the Ohio Academic Content Standards for K-12 Social Studies. Yet, this high level of familiarity considerably declines from roughly three quarters to less than a quarter when it comes to the Five Themes of Geography; and it diminishes even more on the part of high school teachers. That the middle school teachers are more familiar with the Five Themes of Geography would be fairly predictable as they are the ones who carry out the mission: teaching geography in the secondary social studies curriculum.

However, what is more surprising is teachers’ unfamiliarity with the National Geography Standards. Shockingly, over one quarter of the teachers surveyed, which is again considerably higher on the part of high school teachers, have never heard of the National Geography Standards. In addition, 39 percent of the high school teachers or 32 percent of all the teachers in total admitted that they are “Somewhat” familiar with the National Geography Standards, which were developed in 1994 and distributed widely across the nation since then.
Table 4.23: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages for Secondary Social Studies Teachers’ Familiarity with Selected Publications on Social Studies and Geography Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publications</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th></th>
<th>High School</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>SF</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>VF</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio Academic Content Standards for K-12 Social</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five Themes of Geography</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Geography Standards</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. NA = Not At All; SF = Somewhat Familiar; F = Familiar; VF = Very Familiar*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publications</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>SI</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio Academic Content Standards</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for K-12 Social Studies</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five Themes of Geography</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Geography Standards</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* NA = Not At All; SI = Somewhat Incorporated; I = Incorporated; VI = Very Incorporated

Table 4.24: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages for Secondary Social Studies Teachers’ Incorporation of Selected Publications into the Social Studies Curriculum
Table 4.24 above reveals social studies teachers’ responses regarding how well their curriculum incorporates the Ohio Academic Content Standards for K-12 Social Studies, the Five Themes of Geography and the National Geography Standards. As predicted, around three quarters of the teachers confirmed that their curriculum incorporates the Ohio Academic Content Standards for K-12 Social Studies a high degree. Parallel to the Table 4.23 above, their incorporation of the Five Themes of Geography into the curriculum greatly diminishes. For example, nearly half of the teachers, which is greater on the part of high school teachers, acknowledged that their curriculum “Somewhat” incorporates the Five Themes of Geography. On the other hand, forty-five percent of the high school teachers indicated that their curriculum “Somewhat” incorporates the National Geography Standards. In addition, more astonishingly, nearly half of the high school teachers confessed that they do not incorporate the National Geography Standards at all.
Teachers’ Perceptions about Test Preparation

Table 4.25 below exhibits social studies teachers’ perspectives on test preparation, specifically for the OGT. Teachers’ responses regarding test preparation basically fall under two distinct categories. One is at the personal level including test preparation activities practiced in the classroom or school. The other one refers to the institutional level, which includes restrictions coming from the district or state. Therefore, the first three statements fall under the personal level while the last three go down to the institutional level. In general, results suggest that teachers do prepare or have to prepare their students for the OGT. For example, two-thirds or more of the teachers assert that their state standards or frameworks and thus their school curriculum are aligned with the OGT or vice versa. This also is evidenced by the fact that instructional texts and materials that the district requires them to use are compatible with the OGT. Furthermore, a great majority of the teachers surveyed provide their students with test-specific preparation materials developed commercially or by the state, including released items from the OGT as well as making their tests in a similar format to the OGT. This is especially evidenced by the responses given by the 9th - 10th grade teachers, who are at the core of the OGT. That is, it seems that the teachers who teach grades at which the OGT is administered place somewhat more emphasis test preparation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements About Test Preparation</th>
<th>Grades 6-8</th>
<th>Grades 9-10</th>
<th>Grades 11-12</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The OGT is compatible with my preferred teaching approach</td>
<td>n 26</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 28</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide students with test-specific preparation materials developed commercially or by the state, including released items from the OGT</td>
<td>n 14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>148</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sections of my tests are in a similar format to the OGT</td>
<td>n 0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>174</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My school’s curriculum is aligned with the OGT</td>
<td>n 0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>178</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The instructional texts and materials that the district requires to me use are compatible with the OGT</td>
<td>n 8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I teach to the state standards or frameworks, students will do well on the OGT</td>
<td>n 10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 11</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree

Table 4.25: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages of Social Studies Teachers’ Statements about OGT Preparation
Teachers’ Perceptions about Test Pressure

Table 4.26 below reveals social studies teachers’ perspectives on test pressure resulting from the OGT. A great majority of the secondary social studies teachers claim that they feel pressure from the superintendent, principal and parents in order to raise scores on the OGT. They also see their students being under intense pressure to perform well on the OGT. In addition, a small portion of the teachers claimed that there are teachers in their school who want to transfer out of the grades where the OGT is administered. Therefore, approximately half of the teachers who responded to the survey express a considerably lower level teacher morale and/or motivation due to the OGT. In most cases, the 9th – 10th grade teachers’ responses are slightly higher than those who teach after the OGT, the 11th – 12th grade teachers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements About Test Pressure</th>
<th>Grades 6-8</th>
<th>Grades 9-10</th>
<th>Grades 11-12</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( D )</td>
<td>( N )</td>
<td>( A )</td>
<td>( D )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In order to raise scores on the OGT, teachers feel pressure from the superintendent, principal and parents</td>
<td>( n ) 4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are under intense pressure to perform well on the OGT</td>
<td>( n ) 4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers in my school want to transfer out of the grades where the OGT is administered</td>
<td>( n ) 26</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to the OGT teacher morale and/or motivation is high in my school</td>
<td>( n ) 46</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* \( D \) = Disagree; \( N \) = Neutral; \( A \) = Agree

Table 4.26: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages of Social Studies Teachers’ Statements about OGT Pressure
Teachers’ Perceptions about Test-driven Judgment

Table 4.27 below reviews social studies teachers’ perspectives on test-driven judgment about particular issues. For instance, more than a half of the teachers surveyed do not necessarily consider the OGT scores as being accurate indicators of the quality of education that students have received in their school. Indeed, eighty percent of the social studies teachers who participated in the study do not accept the notion that it is appropriate to use OGT results to evaluate teacher or administrative performance, and to award high school diplomas and school accreditation. As a result, they do not concede the State Report Card as being an accurate information provider on student and school performance. Unlike the results shown in Table 4.26, by grade level, the 8 – 9 grade teachers who are teaching at the middle school level appear to be stronger in their agreement or disagreement against the statements about executive judgment based on test results.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements About Test-Driven Judgment</th>
<th>Grades 6-8</th>
<th>Grades 9-10</th>
<th>Grades 11-12</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scores on the OGT accurately reflect the quality of education students have received in my school</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is appropriate to use OGT results to evaluate teacher or administrative performance, award high school diplomas and school accreditation</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The State Report Card provides accurate information on student and school performance</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree*

Table 4.27: Distribution of Frequencies and Percentages of Social Studies Teachers’ Statements about OGT Judgment
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter includes a summary of the current study; a review of its major research findings; a discussion and an interpretation of these findings in conjunction with contributions to the related literature; an overview of the major instructional and policy implications based on the research findings; and a closing remark with recommendations for further research.

Summary

The present study was conducted for the purposes of exploring the perspectives of secondary social studies teachers concerning the impact of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) on geography instruction in the middle and high schools currently operating in central Ohio. Aside from complementary research sub-questions, the central research question developed and investigated was as follows:

From the perspectives of social studies teachers in secondary schools of central Ohio, what has been the effect of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) on geography instruction?

Because the OGT is a foremost high-stakes testing program currently in effect in the State of Ohio, this study on one hand contributes greatly to the broad literature on high-stakes testing. On the other hand, this study in fact is one of the first ones to date regarding the impact of the OGT on geography instruction. It is thus crucial to examine
thoroughly such a research question on the vague area of the related literature on geography education. To be able to answer the central question above, an exploratory study was designed by employing quantitative methods and was successfully carried out in accordance with the procedures explained in detail in Chapter 3.

In broader terms, with regard to sampling, the population of this study consists of all secondary social studies teachers who are currently teaching in the middle and high schools of central Ohio. However, here the geographic location “central Ohio” refers exclusively to Franklin County, which is the home of the greater Columbus metropolitan area, and the other contiguous six counties (see Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3 for a detailed population map).

A specifically developed 28-item cross-sectional survey as the major data collection instrument for this study was constructed through a content validity approach and pilot tested. The survey instrument was then administered via the Internet to a randomly selected sample of secondary social studies teachers. The number of teachers who responded to the questionnaire is 206. The data gathered were analyzed by SPSS 16.0. Data analysis of the study basically utilized descriptive statistics and tables and figures were constructed to present the results. The research instrument was intended to measure the perspectives of social studies teachers regarding whether or not there has been a change in geography instruction following the OGT, especially in the areas of instructional time devoted to teaching geography, curriculum and the instructional strategies used in the classroom, use of teaching materials, emphasis of particular geographic concepts/topics, and perceptions about geography and the impact of the OGT.
In order to provide a context for the findings of the current study, a brief review of the demographic profile of the research subjects is necessary prior to engaging in a discussion regarding these findings. The term “research subjects” throughout this study refers explicitly to the “sample” of the study, which primarily consists of social studies teachers who are currently teaching in the middle and high schools of central Ohio. These secondary social studies teachers or research subjects tend to be White males who generally teach middle class students with above average OGT scores in a suburban public school for usually eleven or more years. A great majority of those teachers have a master’s degree; hold a comprehensive social studies (7-12) licensure; and have at least 2 or more college level geography courses taken. One-third of the sample works at a middle school while two-thirds works at a high school setting, frequently teaching U.S. History, World History and Government classes.

Interpretation of the Research Findings

Since the results of the study were examined in depth in Chapter 4, the subsequent section interprets what those seemingly complex research results mean to the general audience prior to a discussion of contributions to the related literature.

The following are the major results aligned with the research sub-questions as organized in the previous results chapter. In regard to geography instruction in secondary schools of central Ohio following the implementation of the OGT, social studies teachers who participated in this study evidently reported that:
1. The time devoted to teaching geography decreased since the implementation of the OGT: the decrease is indicated to be notably higher by teachers in Grades 9-10 where the OGT is administered.

2. They—the total sample—allocated less than five percent of their “average” instructional time in a quarter (nine weeks) to teaching geography and/or related content and skills.

3. They ranked geography as “last” based on its emphasis on the OGT among seven content areas as measured in the social studies portion of the OGT.

4. The time spent on instruction in areas tested by the OGT and problems that are likely to appear on the OGT has increased; whereas, the time allocated for instruction in areas not covered by the OGT has decreased.

5. In terms of the use of in-class assessments, there is no noteworthy change overall. However, objective questions (such as Multiple-Choice and Fill-in-the-Blanks) in addition to short answer and extended response-essay types of assessments—the ones that are most frequently seen on the test—are noticeably reported to show an increase.

6. There is no major change in general for most of the in-class teaching and learning activities. Nonetheless, the only activity that was reported to show a great increase was the practice of writing (such as short response and essays), which was consistent with the finding concerning the in-class assessments above.
7. There is a slight increase on their use of time to raise students’ basic skills and research skills in the classroom, and a considerably greater increase in time devoted to developing students’ critical thinking skills.

8. There is a considerable increase in the following teaching materials and/or resources that they use while teaching geography: maps, globes, atlases and outline maps; e-mails and websites; teacher generated activities; and Ohio K-12 social studies academic content standards. There is a substantial drop in field trips, personal travel, and student experiences.

9. Even though responses notably varied by grade level regarding the emphasis of particular geographic concepts/topics, on the whole, map reading, culture, movement (transportation and immigration), resources (trade, economics) and human-environment interaction among those topics emphasized, rose. The emphasis on teaching landforms, location (longitude and latitude) and climate notably dropped.

10. They agreed on the importance of geography in the school curriculum, and felt confident in their content knowledge of and ability to teach geography, which positively correlates to their rich educational background in geography.

11. Their familiarity with the Ohio Academic Content Standards for K-12 Social Studies was rated as “very familiar.” They rated the Five Themes of Geography as “familiar” and the National Geography Standards as “unfamiliar.”

12. They report incorporating the Ohio Academic Content Standards for K-12 Social Studies “very much,” the Five Themes of Geography “somewhat,” and the National Geography Standards, “not at all.”

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13. They do prepare or have to prepare their students for the OGT. For instance, they generally thought that the instructional texts and materials that the district requires them to use are compatible with the OGT; sections of their tests are in a similar format to the OGT; their school’s curriculum is aligned with the OGT; and they provide students with test-specific preparation materials developed commercially or by the state, including released items from the OGT.

14. They felt pressure from the superintendent, principal and parents in order to raise scores on the OGT and saw their students being under intense pressure to perform well on the OGT. Some even believed that there are teachers who want to transfer out of the grades where the OGT is administered.

15. They reacted against the accuracy of judgment or decision making based solely on the results of the OGT. To illustrate, they do not count on the OGT as accurately reflecting the quality of education that students have received in their school in addition to not seeing it as appropriate to use the OGT results to evaluate teacher or administrative performance, nor to award high school diplomas and school accreditation.

Discussions and Contributions to the Literature

The present research responded to the need in the literature to evaluate the impact of the OGT on geography education as perceived by the social studies teachers in the middle and high schools of central Ohio. Therefore, the findings of this study mainly contribute to two bodies of literature: (a) geography education in particular and (b) high-stakes testing in general. What follows is a discussion of the research findings in the context of the related literature.
Discussion and Contributions to the Literature in Geography Education

Primarily, this study further extends the knowledge in the field of geography education. Within the limits and assumptions of the study as described in Chapter 1, the results of this study offer plain but important explanations as to what the major research question as well as the research sub-questions ask. Based on the overall research findings, it would be reasonable to infer in regard to the major research question that the OGT has impacted the way in which geography instruction is delivered in the secondary schools of central Ohio. Yet, as was expected, this impact shows some variation by school level (middle school versus high school) and/or grade level (Grades 6-8; 9-10; and 11-12). That is to say, these findings suggest that firstly there is a difference between responses of middle and high school teachers; and secondly there also is a difference between responses of the 9th – 10th grade and 11th – 12th grade teachers. A fundamental reason for the first difference would be related to the differing place and status of geography in middle and high school social studies curricula. As outlined in the new Ohio K-12 Social Studies Academic Content Standards, it is a fact that the middle school is the primary place for geography instruction across grades 6 through 12. This simply means that it is the middle school level at which Ohio children get most of their geography education throughout their secondary school lives. In addition, a possible explanation for the second difference could reflect the involuntary or impulsive practices of the 9th – 10th grade teachers as they are the ones at the core of the OGT. Along with the literature on high-stakes testing, the findings of this research clearly suggest such a distinction between the responses of the 9th – 10th and 11th – 12th grade teachers. That is, teachers who teach
grades during which the OGT is administered evidently perform more “teaching to the test” behavior and are under more pressure.

Similar to the results of the research literature examined in Chapter 2, the findings of this study indicated that the OGT as a high-stakes testing program implemented by the State of Ohio has a considerable effect on geography education throughout its secondary schools. However, aside from the increase in teaching-to-the-test practices, the most important impact that the OGT has on geography instruction is a considerable decrease in the amount of time teachers spend with geography in their general social studies curriculum. In specific terms, according to the data, the time devoted to teaching geography is diminishing. Even though geography is one of the social studies subjects tested on the OGT, the decrease in the amount of time to teach geography within the social studies might imply that the geography portion of the social studies test on the OGT is not as important as the others, or geography is over-shadowed in the social studies curriculum by other subjects, particularly by history. This is evidenced by the third finding that teachers consider geography the least emphasized among the social studies content areas tested on the OGT.

The results of this research overall suggest that geography as one of the core subjects in the social studies curriculum does not receive the attention it deserves in the secondary schools. Apparently, as indicated in the comprehensive literature review, this is to some extent the general case across the Unites States. The research literature examined specifically for the purposes of this study frequently cites two categorical factors affecting this undesirable notion. One is correlated to the allocation of instructional time and weight geography is given in the general framework of the social
studies curriculum, which is consistent with this study. One of the primary reasons given in the literature for such a low status and decline of geography in schools is the subsequent rise of, resulting in the integration of the social sciences into the school curricula and thus teaching geography as an integral part of social studies rather than a separate school subject (Ayas, 2008). The emergence of the social studies curriculum to integrate the social sciences in the early 20th century led by historians either excluded geography or limited it to map skills and regional descriptions (Bednarz, 2002; Bettis, 1996; Murphy, 1998; Rallis & Rallis, 1995; Schoenfeldt, 2001; Stoltman, 1990). This is especially true for social studies since the social studies curriculum is getting squeezed as the standards-based reform gains ground (Howard, 2003). Bednarz, Downs & Vender (2003) particularly drew attention to the fact that geography has become a part of the integrated social studies taught across grade levels by sharing time in a crowded curriculum with history, economics, political science, and other social sciences.

Similarly, the new Ohio social studies standards state that the “effective social studies integrates history, geography, economics, political science, other social sciences and humanities in order to prepare students to be participating citizens” (ODE, 2002, p. 24). In Ohio’s integrated K-12 social studies curricula, Grade Five—Geography of North America and Grade Six—World Geography—focus particularly on geography as a school subject. Yet, it is also clear from the standards that the explicit teaching of geography is largely restricted to grades five and six. Although geography is still integrated throughout the later grades, the lack of specific emphasis in discrete geography courses unintentionally might cause the disappearance of geography in the high school.
The other reason why geography is not getting the attention it deserves, besides the poor representation of geography in the school curricula, is due to teachers. The current literature on geography confirmed the persistent problems and inadequacies in training teachers to teach geography (Ayas, 2008). For instance, a vast body of research demonstrated a consensus that many social studies teachers were not educated to teach geography (Bednarz, 2002; Bednarz & Bednarz, 1995; Bettis, 1996; Boehm, Brierley, & Sharma, 1994; Fernald, 1996; Gilsbach, 1997; Gritzner, 1990; Hume & Boehm, 2001; Ludwig, 1995; Morrill, Enedy, & Pontius, 1995; Murphy, 1998). One factor in this issue, Bednarz (2002) asserted, is that social studies composite licenses that most U.S. social studies teachers hold are almost certain to be history-centric. This might likely be the case across the U.S, based on the general literature in geography education. However, it may not be the case in central Ohio as indicated by the findings of this study. This study focused particularly on central Ohio as the research site where many local teachers are graduates of The Ohio State University’s Social Studies and Global Education program, which is geography heavy. Additionally, some other studies declared that many professors preparing geography teachers in the colleges of education are not geographically well-educated (Boehm et al, 1994; Bednarz & Bednarz, 1995; Ludwig, 1995; and Morrill et al, 1995). All of these eventually caused geography to be overshadowed by other disciplines within the social studies, especially by history (Ludwig, 1995).

Even if this study did not directly measure these claims, there are however, some findings that could support those issues discussed above. For example, findings 11 and 12 reveal an inconsistency in teachers’ answers concerning their level of familiarity with and
their level of curriculum incorporation with Ohio’s K-12 social studies standards, the five themes of geography and the national geography standards. In addition to these findings, from personal accounts with teachers during the pilot test of the study, e-mails received during the data collection process and the comments section in the last question of the survey, a considerable number of teachers had asked what the national geography standards were. This means that some teachers who are teaching geography have no idea about the national geography standards.

Moreover, unlike the K-12 social studies standards, nearly half of the teachers acknowledged that their curriculum “somewhat” incorporates the five themes of geography while—more interestingly—nearly half of the high school teachers confessed that they do not incorporate the national geography standards at all. For the overall literature this may reveal some of teachers’ lack of knowledge or interest in the national geography standards. On the other hand, the results of the present study showed that teachers are not aware of the fact that the new Ohio K-12 social studies standards already incorporate the national geography standards as they were blended in by design. As discussed in Chapter 2, this could be easily seen if one takes a quick look at the nature of the geography strand in Ohio’s K-12 social studies standards.

Discussion and Contributions to the Literature in High-Stakes Testing

Besides a discussion on geography education based on the research findings, a discussion on high-stakes testing is also necessary due to the nature of the Ohio Graduation Tests (OGT). The OGT is a key part of Ohio’s educational reform to establish an aligned system of standards, assessments and accountability for Ohio schools (ODE, 2004). Beginning with the high school graduating class of 2007, students must pass the
OGT in order to receive high school diplomas. The new tests are aligned to Ohio’s new academic content standards, which were adopted by the State Board of Education in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. The OGT also meets requirements of the federal law for high school testing (ODE, 2004).

In this context, research on such a topic contributes greatly to a newly emerging literature on the OGT. Supporting the findings of a number of prior research studies pertaining to the impact of high-stakes testing on teaching and learning—Abrams & Madaus (2003); Abrams, Pedualla & Madaus (2003); Taylor, Shepard, Kinner & Rosenthal (2003); Paris & Urdan (2000); Grant (1999); Jones et al. (1999); and McMillan, Myran & Workman (1999)—major findings from this study implied that the OGT has impacted the way teachers teach due to the extreme emphasis placed on the state-mandated standardized testing with sanctions or awards attached to it. A recent study done by Doppen, Misco & Patterson (2008) found that more than two-thirds of teachers in their study agreed with the statement that the OGT has a strong impact on the way teachers taught their social studies courses.

In general, the present study indicated that social studies teachers do practice more of a “teaching to the test” strategy since the implementation of the OGT. This study obviously supported the findings of McCain (2005), Cimbricz (2002), and Grant (1999). McCain (2005) stated that “due to increased importance placed on student performance on these tests, teachers modify their teaching practices to ensure they are covering the materials that will be tested—which is assuring for those in charge of the system and for those who have to pay for it” (as cited in Marschhausen, 2006, p. 25). Correspondingly, Grant (1999) claimed that “testing drives much of what teachers do, and so curricular and
instructional change will occur if and when state tests change;” that is, “change the test and one changes teachers’ practices” (p. 2). To be precise, “state-mandated tests do matter and do influence what teachers say and do in their classrooms” (Cimbricz, 2002, p. 5).

As can be seen from the findings of this study, teachers’ in-class practices, such as instructional materials and resources they mostly use; assessment types they frequently utilize; concept/topics they emphasize; and allocation of more time toward tested items, indicated that teachers are under pressure to perform well on the OGT. This especially seems to be true for those teachers who teach grades where the OGT is administered. For instance, the number of the 9th – 10th grade teachers who responded to the survey is definitely higher than anybody else. This might perhaps suggest an inference that those who participated in the study were likely the ones who are affected most by the OGT. In addition, McMillan, Myran & Workman (1999) discovered that teachers who participated in their study changed their instruction and assessment practices, resulting “in a less professional role in which coverage of content and scoring well on standardized tests are of primary importance in influencing what is taught and how that content is taught” (p. 13). This finding is consistent with the current study in that teachers apparently emphasize more the type of items that are most likely to appear on the test. This was especially evidenced in the responses given by the 9th - 10th grade teachers, who are at the core of the OGT.

One of the major findings of this study concerned the allocation of more time toward tested content, which was frequently cited in the related literature. For example, Jones et al. (1999) found that 80 percent of the teachers in their study reported that
teachers spent more than 20 percent of their total teaching time preparing students for the tests. Similarly, Abrams, Pedualla & Madaus (2003) uncovered that teachers in high-stakes settings reported greatly increased instructional time devoted to tested content at the expense of non-tested content and enrichment activities.

Consequently, these results overall imply a well-known notion “teaching to the test,” even though teachers do not believe the judgments or decision-making done based specifically on the results of the test. Paris & Urdan (2000) stated that surveys of teachers around the United States revealed that many teachers are anxious about the high-stakes tests as they have such a great influence on the curriculum and many are concerned that tests are used against them to judge the quality of teaching and learning. Parallel to this, the current study disclosed that teachers do not rely on test-driven judgment or decision making about themselves, their school and students. As a result, the state testing has led teachers to teach in ways that may “contradict their own notions of sound educational practices” (Abrams, Pedualla & Madaus, 2003, p. 6).

Implications of the Study

In response to the central research question, this study in general suggests that the OGT has had a negative effect on geography instruction as perceived by social studies teachers in secondary schools of central Ohio. For instance, teachers who participated in the study reported that the instructional time for teaching geography in social studies has considerably decreased while teaching-to-the-test practices has considerably increased. In other words, the OGT narrowed down the already limited geography instruction to what is on the social studies portion of the OGT. In the light of the current study and along
with the related literature, there are some instructional and policy implications that need to be discussed.

First of all, there is a gap between what teachers believe and what they practice in reference to the place of geography in the school curriculum. One finding indicated that the overwhelming majority of teachers consider geography an important subject in the social studies; however, another finding pointed out that time devoted to teaching geography has noticeably declined. Possibly, this might be due to a perceived need in preparing students for the test under administrative pressure executed by the state. Yet, if the OGT is here to stay for a long time, then this is an issue that needs to be addressed by teachers, administers, and policy-makers, in order to prepare students as geographically-literate future citizens. Students knowledgeable in geography would seem to be especially important in our increasingly globalized world.

Next, corresponding to the implications addressed above, one potential feature to help realize such perception is to prepare pre-service teachers in the colleges of education before the job while training in-service teachers on the job through professional development activities in ways that equip them with essential knowledge and skills enabling them to successfully tackle the realities of such a higher accountability. This could address areas where teachers are lacking in testing and assessment in addition to providing support for test awareness and easing tensions concerning the negative impact of the OGT on the part of teachers. With supports from all the stake-holders of the OGT, this may prevent teachers from, or at least keep minimal, teaching-to-the-test practices at the expense of cutting precious instructional time for geography as well as for any other subject in the social studies.
Finally, and more critically, when we look at the social studies curriculum in general as pointed out by the literature and supported by this study, it is evident that history is dominating this “integrated” field of study in a very crowded curriculum. This could imply that that does not leave much space for all the other subjects which constitute the field, especially for geography as the chief concern of this study. Yet, this does not mean history gets more attention than it deserves or suggest that its weight in the curriculum should be reduced. It is, rather, to say that like history all the other subjects, in this case geography, deserve to be taught thoroughly as well. However, under the restraints from such a high accountability and the integrated notion of social studies in American schools today, this is one daunting task that challenges educators and policymakers. All the stake-holders therefore need to figure out a way to increase the quality teaching of geography in secondary schools as it has invaluable implications for future citizens in such an increasingly globalized and interconnected world. In fact, from the perspectives of an international social studies and geography educator, it was quite shocking to see how little space geography occupies in the American social studies curriculum across the grades, especially 9 through 12. The related literature examined for this study evidently pointed out a geographic illiteracy that is obvious on the part of American students and adults as well. Again, through the eyes of an international social studies and geography educator, it is difficult to understand why such a world power with overwhelming connections all around the globe teaches its young citizens so little about the world in which we live. I think, apparently, geography has been left behind.
Recommendations for Further Research

Upon completion of the current research, it is highly imperative to reflect on the results of the study that call for further research. The following discussion offers some suggestions that the future direction of the research might take.

To begin with, with respect to contributions to the literature, it would be most important to distinguish a major research finding clearly contradicting to the related literature. That is, a higher level of educational background in geography on the part of teachers. In other words, unlike the mainstream literature claims, social studies teachers in this study were unexpectedly found to have a considerable background in geography. Albeit pre-service social studies teachers might lately be graduating with more geography coursework—as in the case of The Ohio State University—this however is not necessarily contrary to the literature. Indeed, it is assumed that this study had a “non-response bias.” As in the case of this study, “in surveys, such as by email and by mail, one generalization seems to hold up for most surveys, though it is inferential, is that people who have a particular interest in the subject matter or the research itself are more likely to return questionnaires than those who are less interested” (Fowler, 1993, p. 41). This suggests that those who have greater interest in geography responded to the survey while others with little or no interest or background in geography might have ignored it. Therefore, it is crucial that the research instrument be administered to more diverse subjects in terms of their educational background. Yet, doing this requires dealing with another issue on recruiting more social studies teachers with proportionally diverse educational backgrounds.
In addition, the study in general proposes that the time devoted to teaching geography has considerably decreased while the time devoted to practicing and preparing for the OGT has noticeably increased. In such a case, how do teachers re-allocate their instructional time in the classroom to the needs of their students as opposed to the expectations from the school administration and parents? Similarly, the overall results showed that due to increasing emphasis on the OGT, the time for particular items and practices in a cluster, such as the type of in-class assessments or teaching materials and resources, was reported as increased while nothing in the same cluster was decreased. This implies that teachers must have left something out; but, at the expense of what kinds of in-class teaching and learning practices? These seemingly parallel but inherently different issues certainly raise a serious concern that needs to be addressed. To be able to deal with such problems in the light of the current study’s results, follow-up research with the teachers who participated in the study, utilization of qualitative methods including interviews, and classroom observations would help to determine whether and how those teachers compensate this conflicting share of time across in-class practices.

Moreover, the findings of the study indicated that the OGT may cause pressure on teachers—specifically on those who teach grades 9 and 10 during which the OGT is administered—which has supposedly resulted in a decrease in time devoted to teaching geography. This context might raise questions whether or not the OGT is really affecting teachers’ stress level in ways in which they change their instructional strategies in order to accommodate teaching-to-the-test practices; and whether or not the OGT is the only factor or there are other factors affecting the declining instructional time for geography. In line with these questions, further research therefore might focus on determining if
there is a cause-effect relationship between the OGT and the amount of time allocated for geography instruction. Since this is a serious and completely different direction than the current study in terms of methodology, such a study requires psychometrical construction of a new research instrument and application of inferential statistics. In answering these questions, I would recommend utilization of structural equation modeling (SEM) as the most appropriate statistical technique. In this kind of study, time devoted to teaching geography would be a dependent variable; whereas, the factors affecting this result would be independent variables measured by clusters of questions, such as educational background and on the job training of teachers.

Furthermore, when we look at the data, it could easily be seen that the percentage of teachers who participated in our study from urban and rural school districts remained low, which is less than 20 percent (see Table 4.7). This means that urban and rural school teachers are underrepresented. In other words, we have to be cautious about generalizing the findings of this study to urban and rural schools. In order to overcome this concern in further research it would be necessary to sample teachers who are proportionally similar regarding their school setting.

Lastly, I recommend additional research that extends the population of this study from central Ohio to the State of Ohio as a whole, and then suggest further research to be conducted in other states across the U.S. to determine whether their high school graduation or exit exams generate similar results to those found by this study. This would help determine if the findings of this research were only inherent in the practice of the OGT.
APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT LETTER
Dear Social Studies Teacher,

My name is Cemalettin Ayas. I am a PhD candidate in Social Studies & Global Education, and working with Dr. Steven Miller at The Ohio State University.

We are writing to ask for your assistance in my dissertation research entitled "The Impact of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) on Geography Instruction." The purpose of this study is to explore how social studies teachers perceive the impact of the OGT on geography instruction in secondary schools of central Ohio. Today, it is clear that testing has become an important part of your professional life, yet we know very little about your thoughts on this increasingly huge presence in Ohio. In fact, teachers are very much affected by this phenomenon and we believe it is vitally important that policymakers understand your perspectives.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from participation at any time during the study. All information will be kept strictly confidential and no actual names will be used in any report of the research. The data will be used for research purposes only and will be kept in a secure place.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with the study. With regard to benefits of the research, we hope that our research will help educators as well as policy makers understand the nature of social studies teachers' perspectives about the impact of the OGT on geography instruction, and improve the programs related to the OGT, social studies and geography education.

In order to do this, we are kindly asking you and your whole department to take a few minutes to fill out the survey online at surveys.ehe.ohio-state.edu by typing in the survey ID: m2KKm77, which is case sensitive. Please share this invitation with all department members, by encouraging their participation. If those who participated in the study wishes to learn about the results of this research, they will be sent a copy of the report upon request by email. We cannot tell how much your support of this effort means to us. We hope that results can be used to benefit you in your dedication to the teaching profession as well.

Thank you very much for considering participation in our study. Should you have further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at ayas.1@osu.edu or my dissertation advisor, Dr. Steven Miller at miller.74@osu.edu.

Sincerely,

Cemalettin Ayas
Ph.D. Candidate in Social Studies & Global Education
The Ohio State University / E-mail: ayas.1@osu.edu / Telephone: (614) 761-0026
APPENDIX B

OHIO GEOGRAPHIC ALLIANCE SUPPORT LETTER
April 2008

Since 1990, the Ohio Geographic Alliance (OGA) has worked with K-12 social studies and science teachers on efforts to reinvigorate geography, as an academic subject area, in Ohio’s schools. Efforts have included in-service and pre-service activities for teachers, and more recently participation in the development and implementation of the statewide social studies standards.

You are being asked to complete a survey related to the current status of geography in central Ohio schools.

I very much hope that you will participate.

The analysis of the results will be an important, not only in helping determine the pattern of ongoing activity, but also in helping identify future activities that might be needed.

Sincerely,

W. Randy Smith, Ph.D.
Coordinator
The Ohio Geographic Alliance
614-292-5881
APPENDIX C

IRB EXEMPTION
**TITLE PAGE - APPLICATION FOR EXEMPTION**
FROM REVIEW BY THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
The Ohio State University, Columbus OH 43210

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| Source of Funding | N/A |

For Office Use Only

☑ Approved. ▶ Research has been determined to be exempt under these categories: 
Research may begin as of the date of determination listed below.

☐ Disapproved. ▶ The proposed research does not fall within the categories of exemption. Submit an application to the appropriate Institutional Review Board for review.

Date of determination: 3/24/08 Signature: Janet A. Schulte Office of Responsible Research Practices
APPENDIX D

SURVEY INSTRUMENT
Teacher Questionnaire

1. Please write the name of your school.

2. How many social studies teachers are there in your school?

3. What is your gender?
   - Female
   - Male

4. What is your age?

5. What is your race/ethnicity?
   - African American
   - Asian American
   - Hispanic
   - Native American
   - White
   - Other, please specify

6. Please rank from the list above the first three major race/ethnicities represented by students in your school.
   1
   2
   3

7. What is your primary place of work?
   - Public School
   - Parochial School
   - Private (Non-Parochial) School
   - Charter School
   - Other, please specify
8. Which one of the following does best describe the socio-economic status (SES) of most of the students in your school?
   - Mostly low SES
   - Mostly middle SES
   - Mostly high SES

9. How do your school's (if middle school, your school district's) results on the social studies portion of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) compare to those of other schools in your state?
   - Below average
   - Average
   - Above average

10. How do you identify the setting of your school district?
    - Urban
    - Suburban
    - Rural
    - Other, please specify

11. What grade level(s) do you teach?
    Please check all that apply.
    - 6
    - 7
    - 8
    - 9
    - 10
    - 11
    - 12

12. What social studies related courses do you currently teach?
    Please check all that apply.
    - U.S. History
    - (World, Global, Civilizations) History
    - Government
    - Economics
    - Global Studies
    - Geography
    - Other, please specify

13. How many years of teaching experience do you have, including the present year?

14. When did you start teaching?
    - Before the OGT was implemented
    - After the OGT was implemented
15. What is the highest degree you have completed?
- Bachelor's
- Master's
- Doctorate

16. What is/are your teacher certification or licensure area(s)?
   Please check all that apply.
   - Elementary (1-8)
   - Elementary with Kindergarten (K-8)
   - Middle School (4-9)
   - Integrated or Comprehensive Social Studies (7-12)
   - Geography
   - Other, please specify

17. What is your best estimate regarding the number of college-level geography courses you have taken?

18. How familiar are you with the following publications?

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19. How well does your curriculum incorporate the following resources?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Ohio Academic Content Standards for K-12 Social Studies</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
<th>Somewhat Incorporated</th>
<th>Incorporated</th>
<th>Highly Incorporated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Five Themes of Geography</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The National Geography Standards</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

20. Do you think that the amount of time devoted to teaching geography changed as a result of the OGT?
   If you began teaching after the 2003/04 school year—the onset of the OGT or if you are a middle school teacher, please answer this question based on your perceptions.
- Highly Decreased
21. What percentage of your instructional time in a quarter (nine weeks) on average do you spend on teaching geography and/or related content and skills in your classroom? Please give your best estimate.
   - Under 5%
   - 6% - 10%
   - 11% - 15%
   - 16% - 20%
   - 21% - 25%
   - Over 25%

22. Please list the courses in which you teach geography, starting with the mostly integrated course first. If you are not teaching geography, write "None."
   1.
   2.
   3.

23. How has your interest in or attendance at professional meetings related to geography education (such as workshops, conferences or professional development activities, etc.) changed since the onset of the OGT? If you began teaching after 2003/04 school year, please go to the next question.
   - Highly Decreased
   - Slightly Decreased
   - Remained about the same
   - Slightly Increased
   - Highly Increased
   - Unsure

24. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements. If you are a middle school teacher, please answer these statements based on your perceptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think geography is an important subject in the school curriculum</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My ability to teach geography and/or related concepts and skills are good</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am confident in my content knowledge of geography</td>
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<tr>
<td>The OGT is compatible with my preferred teaching approach</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My school's curriculum is aligned with the OGT</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In order to raise scores on the OGT, teachers feel pressure from the superintendent, principal and parents</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are under intense pressure to perform well on the OGT</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to the OGT teacher morale and/or motivation is high in my school</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers in my school want to transfer out of the grades where the OGT is administered</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide students with test-specific preparation materials developed commercially or by the state, including released items from the OGT</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sections of my tests are in a similar format to the OGT</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The instructional texts and materials that the district requires to me use are compatible with the OGT</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I teach to the state standards or frameworks, students will do well on the OGT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scores on the OGT accurately reflect the quality of education students have received (in your school)</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is appropriate to use OGT results to evaluate teacher or administrative performance, award high school diplomas and school accreditation</td>
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<tr>
<td>The State Report Card provides accurate information on student and school performance</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
25. How has the amount of time spent with the following items in your classroom changed since 2003/04 school year? If you began teaching after the 2003/04 school year—the onset of the OGT—or if you are a middle school teacher, please answer this question based on your perceptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Not Used</th>
<th>Highly Decreased</th>
<th>Slightly Decreased</th>
<th>Remained About the Same</th>
<th>Slightly Increased</th>
<th>Highly Increased</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Instruction in areas tested by the OGT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instruction in areas not covered by the OGT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problems that are likely to appear on the OGT</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing (short-response, essays, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept development using manipulatives or experiments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual seat work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whole group instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students working together in small groups (cooperative learning)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Class enrichment activities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Simulations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Applications to real life</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Basic skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical thinking skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Map skills</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
26. How has the use of the following assessments in your classroom changed as a result of the OGT?
If you began teaching after the 2003/04 school year or if you are a middle school teacher, please answer this question based on your perceptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Category</th>
<th>Highly Decreased</th>
<th>Slightly Decreased</th>
<th>Remained About the Same</th>
<th>Slightly Increased</th>
<th>Highly Increased</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective questions (multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blanks, true-false, etc.)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short answer</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended response-essay</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance assessments-debates, portfolios, experiments</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work yielding an individual product</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work yielding a group product</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27. How much of the use of the following resources in your classroom has changed since the OGT?
If you began teaching after the 2003/04 school year or if you are a middle school teacher, please answer this question based on your perceptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Category</th>
<th>Highly Decreased</th>
<th>Slightly Decreased</th>
<th>Remained About the Same</th>
<th>Slightly Increased</th>
<th>Highly Increased</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other books</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maps, globes, atlases, outline maps</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers/Magazines/Current events</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulations</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Films, videos, DVDs</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer games/programs/CD-ROMs</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>E-mail/Web sites</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher generated activities</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field trips, personal travel, student experiences</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio Academic Content Standards for K-12 Social Studies</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Five Themes of Geography</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Geography Standards</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
28. How has the emphasis of the following geographic topics/concepts changed since the OGT?
If you began teaching after the 2003/04 school year or if you are a middle school teacher, please answer this question based on your perceptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Highly Decreased</th>
<th>Slightly Decreased</th>
<th>Remained About The Same</th>
<th>Slightly Increased</th>
<th>Highly Increased</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maps (map skills or map reading)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Location: longitude and latitude</td>
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<tr>
<td>Places (physical and human characteristic of places)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population; demographics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Movement: transportation, immigration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resources; trade; economics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human-environment interaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Landforms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regions: Ohio, Midwest, US or North America, and World Geography</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application or geography in action (the use of geographical knowledge, skills, and perspectives)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29. Ohio's K-12 social studies content standards consists of seven standards as shown below. How would you rank order the following content areas based on their emphasis in the OGT?
If you are a middle school teacher, please answer this question based on your perceptions. Rank the items below, using numeric values starting with 1.

   History
   People in Societies
   Geography
   Economics
   Government
   Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities
   Social Studies Skills and Methods

30. Please feel free to write any comments not addressed by the questionnaire.
LIST OF REFERENCES


Horn, C. (2003). High-stakes testing and students: Stopping or perpetuating a cycle of failure. Theory Into Practice, 42(1), 30-41.


ODE. (2004). Meeting the challenge: Ohio Graduation Test for social studies (A sampler items for Ohio’s teachers). Columbus, OH. Ohio Department of Education.


