

1963

# Social studies interest areas of fourth and sixth graders in urban and suburban schools

---

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/29028>

*"Downloaded from OpenBU. Boston University's institutional repository."*

*Thesis  
Adams, D. E., et al  
1963*

BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Thesis

SOCIAL STUDIES INTEREST AREAS OF FOURTH  
AND SIXTH GRADERS IN URBAN AND SUBURBAN  
SCHOOLS

Submitted by

Dyanne England Adams

(B.A. in Sociology, Denison University, 1962)

Nancy Poynter Stephenson

(B.A. in History, DePauw University, 1961)

In partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

1963

First Reader: Gilbert M. Wilson, Associate Professor of  
Education

Second Reader: Phyllis Henry, Assistant Professor of  
Education

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. REVIEW OF RESEARCH.....	1
II. JUSTIFICATION OF STUDY.....	18
III. PILOT STUDY.....	20
IV. MAIN STUDY.....	27
V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	38
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	43

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Rank Order of Preferences First Choices Only, of 13,483 Fifth-Grade Children in 1947, and 19,135 Fifth-Grade Children in 1957.....	3
II. Rank Order of Preferences, First Choices Only, of 6,932 Fifth-Grade Boys in 1947, and 9,737 Fifth-Grade Boys in 1957.....	4
III. Rank Order Preferences, First Choices Only, of 6,551 Fifth-Grade Girls in 1947, and 9,398 Fifth-Grade Girls in 1957.....	5
IV. Rank Order of Favorite Subjects of Teachers in 1947 and 1957.....	6
V. Per Cent of Preferences in Social Studies Subjects Areas of 4,129 Pupils in Grades II through VI.....	10
VI. Number and Per Cent of Social Studies Questions Asked by 1,485 Fifth-Grade Pupils, and 1,444 Sixth-Grade Pupils in Each of the Eleven Social Studies Categories.....	12
VII. Variance in the Number of Choices Requested by Children in Grades 2,4, and 6 in Suburban School.....	26
VIII. Variance in the Number of Items Suggested by 200 students in Grade 4 in Suburban and Urban Schools.....	31
IX. Variance in the Number of Items Suggested by 175 Students in Grade 6 in Suburban and Urban Schools.....	33
X. Average Number of Responses Submitted by Fourth-Grade Student in Each Class.....	35
XI. Average Number of Responses Submitted by Sixth-Grade Student in Each Class.....	35
XII. Social Studies Interest Preferences by Category and Subcategory Suggested by Responses of 200 Students in Grade 4 Suburban and Urban Schools.....	36

XIII. Social Studies Interest Preferences by  
Category and Subcategory Suggested by  
Responses of 175 Students in Grade 6  
Suburban and Urban Schools..... 37

## CHAPTER I

### REVIEW OF RESEARCH

A review of the existing research in the field of social studies reveals a great interest in the area of preference studies. No attempt is being made in this chapter to judge the value of these studies, but merely to reveal the angles of study and the existing conclusions from the research. Chase and Wilson<sup>1</sup> in the Boston University Journal of Education indicate these categories which will be summarized: subject preferences, influence of achievement and ability on preference, social studies as a liked and disliked subject, activity preferences, and teacher influence. Other factors handled in more recent research will also be considered.

#### 1. Subject Preferences

In 1947, Blanchard's<sup>2</sup> preference study showed social studies to be fourth out of ten subjects while ten years later it had fallen into fifth place. Table 1 shows the

---

<sup>1</sup> W. Linwood Chase and Gilbert M. Wilson, "Preference Studies in Elementary School Social Studies," Boston University Journal of Education, 140 (April 1958).

<sup>2</sup> Helen C. Blanchard, "Subject Preferences of Fifth-Grade Children," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948).

rank order of first choice preferences in 1947 and 1957. Table 2 shows the rank order of preferences for boys, and Table 3 shows the rank order of preferences for girls, a decade apart. Table 4 shows the rank order of favorite subjects of teachers in the same years. These studies only take into account fifth-grade pupils.

## 2. Influence of Achievement and Ability on Preference

Gardner<sup>3</sup> tried to determine whether pupils of high reading achievement had different subject preferences than pupils of low reading achievement. He concluded that achievement in reading had no certain degree of influence on the social studies preferences of fifth graders. Cobleigh<sup>4</sup> repeated this study nine years later to find if any changes had occurred. His results paralleled those of the earlier study with the additional finding that high achievers found social studies easy compared with the total group evaluation. Earley<sup>5</sup> in analyzing the influence of the factors of intelli-

---

<sup>3</sup> George H. Gardner, Jr., "Differences in Subject Preferences of High-Achievement Readers and Low-Achievement Readers," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948)

<sup>4</sup> Richard Cobleigh et al., "Subject Preferences of Fifth-Grade Children," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1957)

<sup>5</sup> William L. Earley, Jr., "An Analysis of the Influences of Intelligence and Age Differences upon Fifth-Grade Children's Preferences for School Subjects," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948)

TABLE I

RANK ORDER OF PREFERENCES, FIRST CHOICES ONLY, of 13,483 FIFTH-GRADE CHILDREN IN 1947, AND 19,135 FIFTH-GRADE CHILDREN IN 1957

<u>1947 Study</u>			<u>1957 Study</u>		
Rank Order of Subjects	Number Choosing	Per Cent	Rank Order of Subjects	Number Choosing	Per Cent
1. Reading	3,060	22.70	1. Arithmetic	4,098	21.42
2. Arithmetic	2,998	22.24	2. Reading	3,759	19.64
3. Art	2,389	17.72	3. Art	2,895	15.13
4. Social Studies	1,268	9.40	4. Spelling	2,288	11.96
5. Spelling	1,268	9.40	5. Social Studies	2,080	10.87
6. Music	1,241	9.20	6. Science	1,645	8.60
7. Science	609	4.52	7. Music	1,236	6.46
8. Health Education	316	2.34	8. Health Education	494	2.58
9. Penmanship	258	1.92	9. Penmanship	487	2.54
10. Language	76	0.56	10. Language	153	0.80
Totals	<u>13,483</u>	<u>100.00</u>	Totals	<u>19,135</u>	<u>100.00</u>

TABLE II

RANK ORDER OF PREFERENCES, FIRST CHOICES ONLY, OF 6,932 FIFTH-GRADE  
BOYS IN 1947, AND 9,737 FIFTH-GRADE BOYS IN 1957

<u>1947 Study</u>			<u>1957 Study</u>		
Rank Order of Subjects	Number Choosing	Per Cent	Rank Order of Subjects	Number Choosing	Per Cent
1. Arithmetic	1,597	23.04	1. Arithmetic	2,174	22.33
2. Reading	1,529	22.06	2. Reading	1,668	17.13
3. Art	1,286	18.56	3. Art	1,529	15.70
4. Social Studies	834	12.03	4. Social Studies	1,372	14.09
5. Spelling	516	7.44	5. Science	1,256	12.90
6. Science	425	6.13	6. Spelling	844	8.67
7. Music	421	6.07	7. Music	388	3.99
8. Health Education	195	2.81	8. Health Education	298	3.06
9. Penmanship	99	1.43	9. Penmanship	154	1.58
10. Language	30	0.43	10. Language	54	0.55
Totals	<u>6,932</u>	<u>100.00</u>	Totals	<u>9,737</u>	<u>100.00</u>

TABLE III

RANK ORDER PREFERENCES, FIRST CHOICES ONLY, OF 6,551 FIFTH-GRADE  
GIRLS IN 1947, AND 9,398 FIFTH-GRADE GIRLS IN 1957

<u>1947 Study</u>			<u>1957 Study</u>		
Rank Order of Subjects	Number Choosing	Per Cent	Rank Order of Subjects	Number Choosing	Per Cent
1. Reading	1,531	23.36	1. Reading	2,091	22.25
2. Arithmetic	1,401	21.39	2. Arithmetic	1,924	20.47
3. Art	1,103	16.84	3. Spelling	1,444	15.37
4. Music	820	12.52	4. Art	1,366	14.54
5. Spelling	752	11.48	5. Music	848	9.02
6. Social Studies	434	6.62	6. Social Studies	708	7.53
7. Science	184	2.81	7. Science	389	4.14
8. Penmanship	159	2.43	8. Penmanship	333	3.54
9. Health Education	121	1.85	9. Health Education	196	2.09
10. Language	46	0.70	10. Language	99	1.05
Totals	<u>6,551</u>	<u>100.00</u>	Totals	<u>9,398</u>	<u>100.00</u>

TABLE IV

RANK ORDER OF FAVORITE SUBJECTS OF TEACHERS IN 1947 AND 1957

<u>1947 Study</u>			<u>1957 Study</u>		
Subject	No. of Teachers	Per Cent	Subject	No. of Teachers	Per Cent
1. Arithmetic	221	40.68	1. Arithmetic	288	39.79
2. Social Studies	70	12.89	2. Social Studies	185	25.55
3. Geography	67	12.34	3. Reading	85	11.74
4. Reading	64	11.79	4. Language	50	6.91
5. History	38	7.01	5. Geography	43	5.94
6. Language	38	7.00	6. History	25	3.45
7. Music	23	4.24	7. Science	23	3.17
8. Science	12	2.21	8. Music	14	1.93
9. Art	9	1.66	9. Spelling	6	.83
10. Spelling	<u>1</u>	<u>.18</u>	10. Art	<u>4</u>	<u>.69</u>
Totals	543	100.00	Totals	724	100.00

gence and age differences concluded that these factors do not significantly affect the preferences of fifth graders. From these studies it seems possible to conclude that age, intelligence and reading achievement do not affect preference in social studies.

### 3. Social Studies as a Liked and Disliked Subject

Kinsley<sup>6</sup> studied the difficulty of well-liked school subjects and discovered that boys found history, geography and social studies easier than the girls. Cobleigh<sup>7</sup> repeated this study nine years later in 1958 and obtained similar results. Sullivan<sup>8</sup> revealed that girls had fewer dislikes than boys but girls disliked history, geography, and social studies more than boys. There seems to be a lack of research in this area.

### 4. Activity Preferences

Stewart<sup>9</sup> made the following conclusions after studying activity preferences in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades: multiple texts are favored, group participation was chosen by

---

<sup>6</sup> Katherine M. Kinsley, "Children's Evaluation of the Difficulty of Well-Liked School Subjects," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948)

<sup>7</sup> Cobleigh, loc. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Esther M. Sullivan, "Children's Evaluation of the Difficulty of Disliked School Subjects," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948)

<sup>9</sup> Dorothy H. Stewart, "Children's Preferences in Types of Assignment," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1945)

older children of upper intelligence while partner participation was favored by younger, slow-learning children, self-direction was more popular than teacher-direction, reading activity was not a frequent choice but it was more frequently mentioned in grade four and least mentioned in grade six, writing activity was not a preferred activity but was most preferred by sixth graders and by girls rather than boys, drawing was first or second choice at all grade levels and received top preference by those in the top and bottom intelligence quartiles, constructing was generally the most favored activity choice, and talking was the least popular activity in any grade although it was favored more by sixth grade girls than boys.

Wallenthin<sup>10</sup> studied the degree of popularity of written activities with fifth and sixth graders through a questionnaire of paired comparisons and discovered preference in this order: work with two or three to write a report, write a letter, write a report by yourself, write a list, write a diary, take notes, write an outline, copy material, write a question, and write a summary.

Foley<sup>11</sup> gave an activity check list to sixth grade

---

<sup>10</sup> Doris V. Wallenthin, "Preferences of Fifth and Sixth Grade Pupils in Written Activities," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1945)

<sup>11</sup> Harriet M. Foley, "Preferences of Sixth Grade Children for Certain Social Studies Activities," (unpublished Master's thesis, 1951)

children and asked them to rate thirty-eight items either: I have not done this, I like it very much, I neither like or dislike it, I dislike it very much. Girls favored dramatization and collections while boys favored maps and audio-visual aids. Field trips were popular with both sexes. Writing summaries, questions and answers, following outlines, and study exhibits were the least popular. Duval<sup>12</sup> repeated the Foley study a year later with fifth grade children and obtained significant differences on only five items out of thirty-eight.

#### 5. Subject Matter Preference

Bresnahan<sup>13</sup> tackled the area of preferences in subject-matter. Nine categories of subject matter were determined, including: People, Group occupations, Progress through inventions, Periods of time, Cultural aspects, Aesthetic aspects, Social aspects, Natural aspects, and Geographic aspects. Statements were constructed for each grade level from second through sixth so that the child could indicate his preference for each category over all eight other categories. Table V shows preferences for grades two through six.

---

<sup>12</sup> David P. Duval, "Preferences of Fifth Grade Children for Certain Social Studies Activities," (unpublished Master's thesis, 1952)

<sup>13</sup> Virginia W. Bresnahan et al., "Preferences of Children in Grades Two through Eight in Social Studies Areas," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1952)

TABLE V

PER CENT OF PREFERENCES IN SOCIAL STUDIES SUBJECTS AREAS OF 4,129

PUPILS IN GRADES II THROUGH VI

<u>Categories</u>	<u>II-708</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>III-767</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>IV-905</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>V-972</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>VI-777</u>	<u>Rank</u>
People	50.30	4	44.16	9	61.42	2	61.98	1	58.04	1
Group Occupations	51.98	3	46.32	6	51.05	4	45.72	7	47.17	7
Progress through inventions	48.94	6	51.13	4	41.42	8	42.92	8	40.98	9
Periods of time	56.60	2	59.12	1	64.99	1	59.29	2	53.65	3
Cultural aspects	60.50	1	56.73	2	48.56	6	51.76	3	52.01	4
Aesthetic aspects	38.76	9	48.79	5	44.67	7	51.65	4	56.91	2
Social aspects	44.98	8	44.74	8	37.17	9	37.88	9	43.26	8
Natural resources	50.02	5	52.88	3	48.77	5	47.49	6	50.75	5
Geographic aspects	47.92	7	44.94	7	51.82	3	48.74	5	47.21	6

Others have also thought that children's interests have implications for education. Jersild and Tasch<sup>14</sup> published a book on the subject in 1949 and Clark<sup>15</sup> did a thesis in this area asking children to write freely on all the questions they could think of in any context. The answers were classified according to categories used by Baker<sup>16</sup> in 1945. The 1952 study revealed that the number of questions per child nearly doubled and that where the category of Animal Life in the field of Science ranked first in 1945, Man As a Social Being in the area of Social Studies ranked first in 1952. 49.23 per cent of the questions asked fell into the area of Social Studies while only 27.95 per cent fell into the area of Science in Clark's study. The categories and percentages are as follows:

---

<sup>14</sup> Arthur T. Jersild and Ruth J. Tasch, Children's Interests and What They Suggest for Education, (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949)

<sup>15</sup> Edythe T. Clark et al., "What Children Want to Know About Their World," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1952)

<sup>16</sup> Emily V. Baker, Children's Questions and Their Implications for Planning the Curriculum, (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1945)

TABLE VI

NUMBER AND PER CENT OF 54,389 QUESTIONS ASKED BY 2,401 BOYS AND 2,339 GIRLS IN GRADES 4,5, AND 6, WHICH CAN BE CLASSIFIED IN EACH OF ELEVEN SOCIAL STUDIES CATEGORIES

<u>Categories</u>	BOYS		GIRLS		TOTAL	
	<u>No. of Ques.</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>	<u>No. of Ques.</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>	<u>No. of Ques.</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
1. Man as a Social Being	2112	7.84	2128	7.75	4240	7.80
2. American History and Government	1285	4.77	1142	4.16	2427	4.46
3. Communication	1636	6.08	2131	7.76	3767	6.93
4. Travel and Transportation	1588	5.90	693	2.52	2281	4.19
5. Inventions	699	2.60	402	1.46	1101	2.02
6. Geography of the U.S. and Its Territories	600	2.23	559	2.04	1159	2.13
7. Distant Lands and Peoples	974	3.61	1039	3.78	2013	3.70
8. Industries and Commercial Products	1688	6.27	1902	6.93	3590	6.60
9. The Local Community	422	1.57	408	1.49	830	1.53
10. Recreation	1293	4.80	1428	5.20	2721	5.00
11. War	1593	5.92	1058	3.85	2651	4.87
Totals	13890	51.59	12890	46.94	26780	49.23

## 6. Pupil Obstacles

Stacey<sup>17</sup> did a study on pupil dislikes for history and geography and found these items to present the largest obstacles in order of difficulty: History: remembering dates, too much to remember, poor marks in history, too much to cover, history book hard to read, dislike for history because reading is hard, and in Geography: hard to remember what I read, difficulty in locating places on a globe, poor marks in geography, book in geography hard to read, dislike for geography because reading is hard.

## 7. Teacher Influence

Donahue and Dyer<sup>18</sup> made a follow-up study to the 1947 fifth-grade subject preference study in 1950 when the original pupils were in the seventh grade. In one of the communities in 1947 only 6.26 per cent had listed social studies as a first choice, but as seventh graders, 22.55 per cent of the same children listed social studies as their first choice. However the second community showed a loss in first place social studies choices.

The unusual gain in the first community prompted

---

<sup>17</sup> Grace R. Stacey et al., "An Analysis of Likes and Dislikes for History and Geography of 3,360 Sixth Grade Children," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1951)

<sup>18</sup> Harland W. Donahue and Mary E. Dyer, "Subject Preferences of Seventh Grade Children as Compared with Their Fifth Grade Preferences," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1950)

Harrier and Laubner<sup>19</sup> to interview the eighty-seven children who had made social studies their first, second, or third choice in the fifth grade. They determined that the contagion of teacher interest was the main factor in the situation.

With a background of the 1947 study of Subject Preferences of Fifth-Grade Children, Wolffer<sup>20</sup> studied the ten highest-rated and the ten lowest-rated classrooms by subject preference. He observed the teaching in all twenty classrooms for half a day and interviewed each teacher. Cobleigh repeated this study in 1957 and they both concluded that the teacher is responsible for maintaining high quality activities. The teacher must assume his powerful and unique responsibility in the area of social studies for what the teacher does is the curriculum and it does make a difference.

#### 8. More Recent Research

More research has been completed in this area since the Chase and Wilson bulletin. In a study excluded from the bulletin done in 1951, Gay<sup>21</sup> discovered that third-grade boys

---

<sup>19</sup> Constance S. Harrier and George F. Laubner, "A Study in the Causes of Change of Attitude Toward Social Studies Between the Fifth and Seventh Grades Among Eighty-Seven Children," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1951)

<sup>20</sup> William A. Wolffer, "Techniques and Practices Used in Twenty Social Studies Classrooms," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948)

<sup>21</sup> Ella M. Gay, "Preferences of Third-Grade Pupils in Activities of The Social Studies," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1951)

and girls most frequently chose visiting and least chose drawing in activity preferences. In a 1958 study, Johnston<sup>22</sup> ascertained through a check list similar to Foley's that fifth-grade children like to use the same social studies book as each child in the class, and that map study is the least liked activity. Social studies ranked fifth in subject preference.

Cosentino<sup>23</sup> discovered in a 1959 study that seventh graders prefer audio-visual aids to any other type of activity. They enjoy museum trips also. Tests are the least popular, with reporting to the class and writing up research also ranking high among disliked activities. McGowan<sup>24</sup> gave a check list similar to Foley's to fourth graders and found that the popularity of museum visits had dropped while audio-visuals were on top. Doing assignments was the least favored and testing was unpopular. Social Studies was sixth in subject preference.

In 1960 Langley<sup>25</sup> did a study similar to Wallenthin's

---

<sup>22</sup>Florence R. Johnston, "Preferences of Fifth-Grade Children for Certain Social Studies Activities," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1958)

<sup>23</sup>Michael Cosentino, "Preferences of Seventh-Grade Children for Certain Social Studies Activities," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1959)

<sup>24</sup>Albert J. McGowan, Jr., "Preferences of Fourth-Grade Children for Certain Social Studies Activities," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1959)

<sup>25</sup>Irene L. Langley, "A Comparison Study of the Preferences in Written Activities of the Social Studies in the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades, Including High and Low I.Q. Segmented Groups," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1960)

comparing the preferences of fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth graders for written activities. In all four grades writing a letter was rated most popular and doing a report by yourself was second. Fandel<sup>26</sup> studied the activity preferences of sixth graders in 1961. Audio-visuals ranked first, and listening to reports second, preparing reports ranked low and reading social studies and answer questions made by the teacher and writing answers to questions were least popular.

In other areas besides activity preference research was also done. McLaughlin<sup>27</sup> did a study similar to Clark in 1959 on what questions fourth, fifth, and sixth grade children from Alaska ask about their world. In studying the relationship between knowledge of current news and preference for social studies, Richardson<sup>28</sup> found in 1948 that fifth-grade boys and girls who prefer social studies to other subjects have a greater knowledge of current events than those children who don't prefer social studies. The amount of current events known was not different for the sexes but they were not well informed as a group. Less than one-third of the children favored social studies.

---

<sup>26</sup> Francis X. Fandel, "Preferences of Sixth-Grade Children for Certain Social Studies Activities," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1961)

<sup>27</sup> Russell A. McLaughlin, "What Questions Do the Native Children of Alaska Ask About Their World," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1959)

<sup>28</sup> Clarence O. Richardson, "The Relationship Between Knowledge of Current News and Preference for Social Studies on a Fifth-Grade Level," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948)

In 1962 Todd<sup>29</sup> did a study in individual differences among fifth graders in social studies. Although there were great variations, several things were apparent. Marked vocabulary differences were observed. There was little difference in liked and disliked activities and little or no correlation between liked and disliked subject matter and preferences for written activities between children of high and low intelligence.

---

<sup>29</sup> Neal F. Todd, "Individual Differences Among Fifth-Graders in Social Studies," (unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1962)

## CHAPTER II

### JUSTIFICATION OF STUDY

Although the need is recognized for work in the area of preference studies, comparatively little research has been done. The major contributions have been made by the Twelfth Yearbook of the California Elementary School Principal's Association,<sup>1</sup> Jersild and Tasch,<sup>2</sup> a report by Chase<sup>3</sup> and the most recent, the 1958 summary by Chase and Wilson.<sup>4</sup> The major works have been pre-constructed check lists or questionnaires, not necessarily limited to social studies. As Chase and Wilson stated: "Many educators believe that children's interests expressed in their questions bear implications for those who are concerned with curriculum."<sup>5</sup> Therefore it seems natural that there would be a great deal of interest and research being done in this area. Actually..."Very little is

---

<sup>1</sup> Children's Interests, Twelfth Yearbook of the California Elementary School Principal's Association, (Sacramento: News Publishing Company, 1940)

<sup>2</sup> Jersild and Tasch, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> W. Linwood Chase, "Subject Preferences of Fifth-Grade Children" Elementary School Journal, 50 (December, 1949, 204-211)

<sup>4</sup> Chase and Wilson, loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 21

known about what children would choose to study in the field of the social studies if given the opportunity to make choices."<sup>6</sup> Clark<sup>7</sup> came the closest to this problem, however her question was not limited to social studies.

It was with this background that the authors decided to do the present study within the limits of a definite construction. First that it be as freely structured as possible enabling the child to put down his own thoughts. Second, that it be limited to the field of social studies. Third, that an age range be included to show what changes may be applied to age. Fourth, that different economic areas be included to discover what factors may be attributed to this variable.

The lack of knowledge in the area was apparent and so with this in mind the authors went ahead to plan the study in a way which it was hoped would also allow them to discover the maximum about children as well as provide additional research to those interested in this area.

First of all it was decided to include second, fourth, and sixth graders from urban and suburban school systems. With this as the goal a suburban school was selected in which to do the pilot study of second, fourth, and sixth graders.

---

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 19

<sup>7</sup>Clark, loc. cit.

DIRECTIONS TO THE TEACHER

1. Distribute large sheets of paper to each student.
2. Either pen or pencil may be used.
3. Read the following directions to the students:
  - A. On the first line write your Name and the Date.
  - B. On the next line write Boy or Girl.
  - C. On the third line write your Grade and Name of School.
  - D. Pens or Pencils down.
4. Read this question to the students:

I KNOW THAT YOU HAVE BEEN READING IN SOCIAL STUDIES, BUT I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE YOU WRITE DOWN A LIST OF THINGS FOR ME THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO LEARN ABOUT IN YOUR SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS IF YOU WERE TO HELP PLAN THE COURSE OF STUDY FOR YOUR SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAM. YOU MAY HAVE HEARD ABOUT THIS IN SCHOOL OR OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL. THIS LIST MAY HAVE TO DO WITH PLACES YOU HAVE BEEN OR WOULD LIKE TO GO TO, STORIES YOU HAVE READ IN BOOKS, MAGAZINES, ENCYCLOPEDIAS, OR SOMETHING YOU HAVE HEARD ON TELEVISION OR RADIO.

BE SPECIFIC.
5. Allow 20 minutes for writing down their list of choices.
6. Collect the papers and give them to the investigator.

Upon receipt of the answers each paper was coded by putting in the upper right-hand corner the number 1 for teacher administered, the number 2 for investigator administered. The letter A designated second grade, B for the fourth, and C for the sixth grade.

Each answer was then tabulated according to the category in which it belonged.

Below each major category is an explanation. Following each explanation are quotations from the children's papers in the present study illustrating each concept.

Category I. History

In this category are placed choices dealing with Prehistoric and Ancient, Medieval Ages and Explorations, Pilgrims through the Civil War, and United States since 1865.

A. Prehistoric and Ancient

Example: Cavemen

Example: Caesar

B. Medieval Ages and Explorations

Example: Columbus

Example: Napoleon

C. Pilgrims through the Civil War

Example: John Smith

Example: Robert E. Lee

D. United States since 1865

Example: Depression

Example: Korean War

## Category II. Geography

In this category are placed choices dealing with the size and contour of countries.

Example: How big is New Jersey?

Example: Which is the longest river?

## Category III. Foreign Countries

Choices dealing with questions about foreign countries, how the people act and speak, how they dress were put into this category.

Example: France

Example: What are Spanish people like?

## Category IV. Current Events

Selections dealing with news items of this year were put into this category.

Example: John Glenn

Example: Cuban Crisis

## Category V. Science

In this category are items concerned with astronomy, space, natural science, and physical science.

### A. Astronomy

Example: Saturn

Example: Big Dipper

### B. Space

Example: Russia's rocket

Example: Astronauts

C. Natural Science

Example: Fish and birds

Example: Elm tree

D. Physical Science

Example: Fool's Gold

Example: Uranium

Category VI. Technology

This category contains choices dealing with "how does it work?" and "how does it run?"

Example: How does a gun fire?

Example: What is electricity? Is it alive?

Category VII. Transportation

Any choices concerned with the means or methods of transportation are put in this category.

Example: Airplanes

Example: Boats

Category VIII. Mythology

In this category are placed choices dealing with characters of a mythological nature.

Example: Pandora

Example: Man in the Moon

Category IX. States of the Union

Choices made by children in reference to the study of certain states were placed in this category.

Example: Alaska

Example: Missouri

Category X. Community

In this category are placed choices dealing with items of a neighborhood environmental nature.

Example: The fireman

Example: The milkman

In this pilot study, children's interests in Social Studies, a total of 1,282 choices were submitted by the 90 children in grades 4, 5, and 6 of a suburban school.

In Table I the choices are accounted for by grade, by teacher administered and by investigator administered.

The second grade class, teacher administered (A1), cannot be shown on the table as it was invalidated by teacher's reading from a history book certain topics which were agreed upon by the class to hold their interests.

TABLE VII

VARIANCE IN THE CHOICES REQUESTED BY 90 STUDENTS IN GRADES 2,  
4, AND 6 IN SUBURBAN SCHOOL.

CATEGORIES	Grade 2	Grade 4		Grade 6	
	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
<u>HISTORY</u>					
Prehistoric and Ancient	2	2	16	21	33
Medieval Ages and Explorations	1	3	9	10	16
Pilgrims through Civil War	7	4	19	28	47
United States since 1865	3	3	12	19	42
<u>GEOGRAPHY</u>	2	13	2	11	18
<u>FOREIGN COUNTRIES</u>	1	20	51	43	57
<u>CURRENT EVENTS</u>	3	17	32	28	44
<u>SCIENCE</u>					
Astronomy	2		60	12	15
Space	7	3	9	15	14
Natural Science	38	14	124	26	38
Physical Science	10		62	57	63
<u>TECHNOLOGY</u>	16	4	79	18	21
<u>TRANSPORTATION</u>	9	1	3	17	10
<u>MYTHOLOGY</u>	5	2	5	12	2
<u>STATES OF THE UNION</u>	4	21	16	29	31
<u>COMMUNITY</u>	11	9	2		1
TOTAL	121	116	391	346	452

On the basis of the number of choices requested by the children and on the basis of the percentage of children who made choices dealing with Social Studies, it was found that the test produced better results when candidate administered. It was decided, therefore, that the candidate would conduct the tests in the major study.

The results of the pilot study in the second grades proved to be negative. It was decided that the major study would compare the interests of children in fourth and sixth grades, suburban and urban schools.

## CHAPTER IV

### MAIN STUDY

The purpose of this research project was to determine the interests of children in the field of Social Studies, unrelated to classroom study in the fourth and sixth grades. A comparison of interests was made between children in suburban and urban schools.

To obtain permission to carry on the study in various schools, phone calls were made by Dr. Gilbert Wilson of Boston University to the principals of these schools, explaining the purpose of the survey.

The four schools in the city and suburbs used in the survey are identified in this study by letters since the schools are to remain anonymous.

#### FOURTH GRADE

<u>School</u>	<u>Type of Community</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>
A	Urban	40
B	Urban	45
C(1)	Suburban	28
C(2)	Suburban	28
D(1)	Suburban	30
D(2)	Suburban	<u>29</u>
	Total	200

SIXTH GRADE

<u>School</u>	<u>Type of Community</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>
A	Urban	33
B	Urban	32
C(1)	Suburban	31
C(2)	Suburban	30
D(1)	Suburban	25
D(2)	Suburban	24
	Total	<u>175</u>

School A is located in East Boston. The students come from lower class families.

School B is located in East Boston. The students come from lower class families.

School C is located ten miles northwest of Boston. The students come from middle to middle-high class families.

School D is located fifteen miles west of Boston. The students come from middle to middle-high class families.

The procedure used in the pilot study, to determine children's interests in the fourth and sixth grades, remained unchanged and the major study was carried out by the same methods.

Upon receipt of the choices made by children four categories were added to the original ten. Below the four additional categories are explained. Following each explanation are quotations from the children's papers in the present study illustrating each concept.

Category XI. Religion

In this category are placed interests dealing with any aspect of religion. Choices regarding the study of Saints, God, Jesus, Judism, Mary and Joseph, etc. are placed in this

category.

Example: I would like to learn more about Baby Jesus.

Example: Judaism

#### Category XII. Vocation

In this category are placed the interests that deal with children's desire to learn more about professions, their parents' work, their own future jobs.

Example: I would like to know more on building buildings.

Example: I want to learn how to be a barber like my father.

#### Category XIII. Sports

Children's interests dealing with any aspect of sports are placed in this category.

Example: Babe Ruth

Example: Bob Cousy

#### Category XIV. Fine Arts

In this category were placed the items that deal with all areas of the arts: Painting, Dancing, Authors, etc.

Example: I want to learn how to write a novel.

Example: Ballet dancer

#### Analysis of Data

In this study, Social Studies Interest Areas of Fourth and Sixth Graders in Urban and Suburban Schools, a total of 3,547 items were submitted by the 375 students in grades 4 and 6 of the cooperating schools.

In Table VIII the items are accounted for by type of community. In the six fourth grades, 200 children submitted 1,637 items, with an average of 7.72 items per student.

TABLE VIII  
VARIANCE IN THE NUMBER OF ITEMS SUGGESTED BY 200 STUDENTS IN  
GRADE 4 IN SUBURBAN AND URBAN SCHOOLS

CATEGORIES	A	B	C(1)	C(2)	D(1)	D(2)
I. HISTORY						
Prehistoric and Ancient		3	12	9	30	22
Medieval Ages and Explorations	2	4	6	15	23	17
Pilgrims through the Civil War	1	1	13	34	61	52
United States since 1865	1	7	41	28	48	65
II. GEOGRAPHY		2	13	11	19	14
III. FOREIGN COUNTRIES	4	9	22	29	42	34
IV. CURRENT EVENTS	5	15	29	32	59	46
V. SCIENCE						
Astronomy	1		15	9	10	12
Space	2	1	7	4	9	6
Natural Science	6	11	7	12	2	5
Physical Science	10	4	6	5	11	14
VI. TECHNOLOGY						
How does it work?	18	26	10	8	5	7
VII. TRANSPORTATION	13	11	4	9	3	

TABLE VIII (Concluded)

VARIANCE IN THE NUMBER OF ITEMS SUGGESTED BY 200 STUDENTS IN  
GRADE 4 IN SUBURBAN AND URBAN SCHOOLS

CATEGORIES	A	B	C(1)	C(2)	D(1)	D(2)
VIII. MYTHOLOGY	2	5	8	1		3
IX. STATES OF THE UNION	7	8	11	25	29	18
X. COMMUNITY	14	9	6		4	
XI. RELIGION	22	35		2	1	
XII. VOCATION	25	21	1		2	
XIII. SPORTS	12	19	3			
XIV. FINE ARTS		1	6	2	14	9
Total	145	192	220	235	372	324

In Table IX the questions are accounted for by type of community. In the six sixth grades, 175 children submitted 1,910 items, with an average of 11 items per student.

TABLE IX

VARIANCE IN THE NUMBER OF ITEMS SUGGESTED BY 175 STUDENTS IN GRADE 6 IN SUBURBAN AND URBAN SCHOOLS

CATEGORIES	A	B	C(1)	C(2)	D(1)	D(2)
I. HISTORY						
Prehistoric and Ancient	4	1	7	15	29	25
Medieval Ages and Explorations	1	5		27	32	19
Pilgrims through Civil War	2	6	24	49	68	63
United States since 1865	8	17	26	38	57	61
II. GEOGRAPHY	3	9	12	17	20	26
III. FOREIGN COUNTRIES	16	21	31	45	73	58
IV. CURRENT EVENTS	12	16	52	41	79	64
V. SCIENCE						
Astronomy	5	11	7	10	4	10
Space	4	5	9	4	15	14
Natural Science	10	12	4	8	6	12
Physical Science	11	14	5	10	7	19
VI. TECHNOLOGY						
How does it work?	28	31	8	11	13	2
VII. TRANSPORTATION	18	7	6	4	1	2

TABLE IX (Concluded)

VARIANCE IN THE NUMBER OF ITEMS SUGGESTED BY 175 STUDENTS IN  
GRADE 6 IN SUBURBAN AND URBAN SCHOOLS

CATEGORIES	A	B	C(1)	C(2)	D(1)	D(2)
VIII. MYTHOLOGY	4		1			
IX. STATES OF THE UNION	9	14	29	51	38	45
X. COMMUNITY	11	6	5	1		1
XI. RELIGION	32	39	2		3	
XII. VOCATION	36	27	4	3	6	
XIII. SPORTS	16	15			2	
XIV. FINE ARTS		3	10	9	6	10
Total	230	261	242	343	459	375

Tables VIII and IX show that the students in suburban schools submitted a greater number of items than did the students in the urban schools. In categories I, II, III, IV, and IX the students in suburban schools indicate a greater awareness and interest in learning more about the world they live in.

Table X shows the average number of responses submitted by a fourth grade student in each class.

Tables X and XI indicate that the average number of items submitted by suburban school children far exceed that of the urban students.

TABLE X

AVERAGE NUMBER OF RESPONSES SUBMITTED BY FOURTH GRADE STUDENT  
IN EACH CLASS

Schools	Number of Students	Average Number of Items
School A	40	3.25
School B	45	4.12
School C(1)	28	7.24
School C(2)	28	8.11
School D(1)	30	12.12
School D(2)	29	11.50
Total	200	7.72

Table <sup>IX</sup> shows the average number of responses submitted  
by a sixth grade student in each class.

TABLE XI

AVERAGE NUMBER OF RESPONSES SUBMITTED BY SIXTH GRADE STUDENT  
IN EACH CLASS

Schools	Number of Students	Average Number of Items
School A	33	6.32
School B	32	8.50
School C(1)	31	7.25
School C(2)	30	11.13
School D(1)	25	18.90
School D(2)	24	15.15
Total	175	11.21

TABLE XII

SOCIAL STUDIES INTEREST PREFERENCES BY CATEGORY AND SUB-CATEGORY SUGGESTED BY RESPONSES OF 200 STUDENTS IN GRADE 4 SUBURBAN AND URBAN SCHOOLS

CATEGORIES	URBAN A & B	SUBURBAN C D		TOTALS
I. HISTORY				
Prehistoric and Ancient	3	21	52	76
Medieval Ages and Explorations	6	21	40	67
Pilgrims through Civil War	2	47	113	162
United States since 1865	8	69	113	190
II. GEOGRAPHY	2	24	33	59
III. FOREIGN COUNTRIES	13	51	76	139
IV. CURRENT EVENTS	20	61	105	186
VII. TRANSPORTATION	24	13	3	40
IX. STATES OF THE UNION	15	36	47	98
X. COMMUNITY	23	6	4	33
TOTAL	116	349	586	

TABLE XIII

SOCIAL STUDIES INTEREST PREFERENCES BY CATEGORY AND SUB-CATEGORY SUGGESTED BY RESPONSES OF 175 STUDENTS IN GRADE 6 SUBURBAN AND URBAN SCHOOLS

CATEGORIES	URBAN		SUBURBAN		TOTALS
	A & B	C	D		
I. HISTORY					
Prehistoric and Ancient	5	22	54		81
Medieval Ages and Explorations	6	27	51		84
Pilgrims through Civil War	8	73	131		212
United States since 1865	25	64	118		207
II. GEOGRAPHY	12	29	46		87
III. FOREIGN COUNTRIES	37	76	129		242
IV. CURRENT EVENTS	28	99	143		270
VII. TRANSPORTATION	25	10	3		38
IX. STATES OF THE UNION	23	80	83		186
X. COMMUNITY	17	6	1		24
TOTAL	186	486	759		

CHAPTER V  
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Summary

The main purposes of this study were:

- A. to determine, through random survey, the Social Studies interest preferences of children in grades two, four, and six in the Boston area
- B. to analyze these preferences through categorization of the responses
- C. to analyze the proportion of items submitted by pupils in suburban schools in relation to those submitted by urban schools
- D. to indicate the variation in item-range from grade to grade.

2. Pilot Study

In the beginning the investigation, a pilot study was conducted in order to ascertain whether or not significant categories could be constructed from the results. A suburban school in the Boston area was chosen, and pupils in two second grade classes, two fourth grade classes, and two sixth grade classes were subjected to a prepared test (see Chapter III, p. 21, supra). In one of the classes at each of the grade levels the test was

conducted by the teacher, and in the others, by the investigators. The 90 pupils who participated in the test listed a total of 1,282 items in response to the question. Thus, there was an average of 14 responses per pupil. The investigators tabulated and classified the results under 10 major categories, including:

I. HISTORY

Prehistoric and  
Ancient

Medieval Ages  
and Explorations

Pilgrims through  
Civil War

United States  
since 1865

II. GEOGRAPHY

III. FOREIGN COUNTRIES

IV. CURRENT EVENTS

V. SCIENCE

Astronomy

Space

Natural Science

Physical Science

VI. TECHNOLOGY

How does it work?

VII. TRANSPORTATION

VIII. MYTHOLOGY

IX. STATES OF THE UNION

X. COMMUNITY

Of these, categories I through IV, VII, IX, and X were considered to be in the general area of Social Studies. The remaining three categories, V, VI, VIII, were classified as miscellaneous. On the basis of overall response to the pilot study question, the investigators found it necessary to expand their original frame of reference to include four further categories: Religion, Vocation, Fine Arts, and Sports.

On the basis of the initial study, it was decided to exclude the second grade pupils from the research design, due to their inability to understand the concept of Social Studies. Further, the proportion of the responses from teacher-administered tests as compared to those from investigator-administered tests indicated that the investigators should supervise and administer the tests in the projected main study.

### 3. Main Study

For purposes of the main study, four schools in the Boston area made available their fourth and sixth grade classes. Two of these were classified by the investigators as urban schools, and two were classified as suburban schools. Procedures similar to those employed in the pilot study were used in conducting the main study (see above). In the total of responses to the main study, 82 per cent of all items listed by the pupils were in

categories classified as Social Studies. At least by this criteria, then, high interest in the field of Social Studies was indicated.

In the comparison of responses from urban pupils and suburban pupils, a strong correlation is shown between suburban pupils and intensity of interest in Social Studies. In the Social Studies categories, 73 per cent of responses came from suburban pupils. Further, the latter group of pupils averaged 11 items per pupil, as compared with the urban school average of 6 items per pupil.

Finally, in the analysis of answers on the basis of grade level, it was found that the number of responses in the Social Studies categories was 14 per cent higher in the sixth grade classes than in the fourth grade classes.

#### 4. Conclusions

The main findings of the investigators, in pursuing answers to the "purpose of the this study" outlined above, may be summarized as follows:

- A. That the Social Studies preferences of both fourth and sixth grades tested were categorically similar, with strongest interest shown in both cases in categories I, History, with most interest in sub-categories United States since 1865 and Pilgrims through the Civil War (fourth grade) and vice versa (sixth grade); IV, Current Events, both

fourth and sixth grades; III, Foreign Countries, both fourth grade and sixth grade; IX, States of the Union, both fourth grade and sixth grade.

- B. That a significantly higher proportion of items was submitted in both fourth and sixth grades from the suburban schools, with the exception, in the case of both fourth and sixth grades, that urban schools led in categories VII and X (see Tables XII and XIII, Chapter IV, pp. 36, 37, supra.)
- C. That the total number of responses was significantly higher in the sixth grade classes.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Books

- Baker, Emily V. Children's Questions and Their Implications for Planning the Curriculum. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1945.
- Jersild, Arthur T., and Tasch, Ruth J. Children's Interests and What They Suggest for Education. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949.
- Piaget, Jean. The Child's Conception of the World. Paterson, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams, and Company, 1960

### Articles and Periodicals

- Chase, W. Linwood. "Subject Preferences of Fifth-Grade Children," Elementary School Journal, 50 (December, 1949), 204-211.
- Chase, W. Linwood, and Wilson, Gilbert M. "Preference Studies in Elementary School Social Studies," Boston University Journal of Education, 140, No. 4 (April 1958)
- Children's Interests, Twelfth Yearbook of the California Elementary School Principals' Association (Sacramento: News Publishing Company, 1940)

### Unpublished Material

- Blanchard, Helen C. "Subject Preferences of Fifth-Grade Children." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948.
- Bresnahan, Virginia W., et al. "Preferences of Children in Grades Two Through Eight in Social Studies Areas." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1952.
- Clark, Edythe T., et al. "What Children Want to Know About Their World." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1952.
- Cobleigh, Richard, et al. "Subject Preferences of Fifth-Grade Children." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1957.

- Cosentino, Michael. "Preferences of Seventh-Grade Children for Certain Social Studies Activities." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1959.
- Donahue, Harland W., and Dyer, Mary E. "Subject Preferences of Seventh-Grade Children as Compared with Their Fifth-Grade Preferences." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1950.
- Duval, David P. "Preferences of Fifth-Grade Children for Certain Social Studies Activities." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1952.
- Earley, William L., Jr. "An Analysis of the Influences of Intelligence and Age Differences Upon Fifth-Grade Children's Preferences for School Subjects." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948.
- Fandel, Francis X. "Preferences of Sixth-Grade Children for Certain Social Studies Activities." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1961.
- Foley, Harriet M. "Preferences of Sixth-Grade Children for Certain Social Studies Activities." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1951.
- Gardner, George H., Jr. "Differences in Subject Preferences of High-Achievement Readers and Low-Achievement Readers." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948.
- Gay, Ella M. "Preferences of Third-Grade Pupils in Activities of the Social Studies." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1951.
- Harrier, Constance S., and Laubner, George F. "A Study in the Causes of Change of Attitude Toward Social Studies Between the Fifth and Seventh Grades Among Eighty-Seven Children." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1951.
- Johnston, Florence R. "Preferences of Fifth-Grade Children for Certain Social Studies Activities." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1958.
- Kinsley, Katherine M. "Children's Evaluation of the Difficulty of Well-Liked School Subjects." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948.
- Langley, Irene L. "A Comparison Study of the Preferences in Written Activities of the Social Studies in the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades, Including High and Low I.Q. Segmented Groups." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1960.

- McGowan, Albert J., Jr. "Preferences of Fourth-Grade Children for Certain Social Studies Activities." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1959.
- McLaughlin, Russell A. "What Questions Do the Native Children of Alaska Ask About Their World." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1959.
- Richardson, Clarence O. "The Relationship Between Knowledge of Current News and Preference for Social Studies on a Fifth Grade Level." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948.
- Stacey, Grace R., et al. "An Analysis of Likes and Dislikes for History and Geography of 3,360 Sixth-Grade Children." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1951.
- Stewart, Dorothy H. "Children's Preferences in Types of Assignment." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1945.
- Sullivan, Esther M. "Children's Evaluation of the Difficulty of Disliked School Subjects." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948.
- Todd, Neal F. "Individual Differences Among Fifth-Graders in Social Studies." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1962.
- Wallenthin, Doris V. "Preferences of Fifth and Sixth Grade Pupils in Written Activities." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1945.
- Wolffer, William A. "Techniques and Practices Used in Twenty Social Studies Classrooms." Unpublished Master's thesis, Boston University, 1948.