This article presents an ecologically informed approach for comprehending the nature of and perceived changes to the relationship between Indiana’s kindergarten-5 classrooms and public history institutions. This perspective offers a lens for understanding the degree to which public history institutions actualize social studies learning and how public policy currently influences their associations with kindergarten-5 classrooms. Consideration was given to how respondents reported exchanges with kindergarten-5 learners, elementary educators, and the extent to which state public history organizations encouraged schools to utilize their resources for extending social studies instruction outside of the classroom. Baseline data gathered in 2007 indicated that: (1) state public history organizations adapted their mission statements to better reflect federal and state educational policy and (2) federal and state educational policy were contributing to both children and teachers being left out of the museum experience. Based on the results, the authors call for sustained inquiry to ascertain the impact such changes are having on the status and quality of kindergarten-5 social studies instruction across the United States.

KEY WORDS: elementary, social studies, history, museums, No Child Left Behind, educational policy

Collaborations between kindergarten-5 classrooms and public history institutions, such as historical and living history museums, historical societies, and historical theaters, actualize social studies learning through authentic exploration, play, and decision making (Monaco & Moussouri, 2009; Zollinger Henderson & Atencio, 2007). Numerous researchers acknowledge that collaboration between kindergarten-5 classrooms and public history establishments can help meet the cognitive and social needs of young learners (American Association of Museums, 1992; Bloom & Mintz, 1990; Brandt, 1993; Christal, 2003; Danilov, 1986; Maiga, 1995; O’Done11, 1995; Wall, 1986). By leveraging their resources, capabilities, and expertise, these public history institutions engage learners in a reflexive consideration of enduring social questions regarding identity, historical character, and the quest for a more perfect union (Boland, 2002; Falk & Dierking, 1992; Marcus, 2007; Simon, 2006; Trofanenko, 2008).

Whereas the benefits of collaborations between schools and public history institutions
abound, the current accountability landscape has augmented the degree and quality of this relationship (see Eakle, 2007; Eakle & Dalesio, 2008). A redeployment of resources to improve student proficiency in reading, writing, and mathematics propel policymakers and school personnel to shift their focus away from elementary level social studies and informal learning contexts such as public history institutions (Monaco & Moussouri, 2009; Vanfossen, 2005; Vanfossen & McGrew, 2008). Costs, liability issues, security matters, and school testing schedules also are of great concern to administrators, thus serving to confine some teachers and students to their classrooms (Eakle & Dalesio, 2008). In addition, school districts might eschew field trips, as these opportunities are not explicitly linked to state standards (Eakle, 2007). With the inception of federal and state accountability measures, an upswing in research investigating the nature, purpose, and extent of K-5 social studies instruction has occurred (e.g., Cawelti, 2006; Rock, Heaffner, O’Connor, Passe, Oldendorf, Good, & Byrd, 2006; VanFossen, 2005; VanFossen & McGrew, 2008). There exists, however, a paucity of research that documents the nature of and perceived changes to the relationships between public history institutions and elementary classrooms in a standards and accountability milieu. Coupled with recent findings authenticating the marginalization of elementary level social studies instruction, such concerns led us to ask “Are there any children left in public history institutions?”

This article brings forth the perceptions of Indiana’s public history institutions gathered in 2007 to substantiate claims that rigorous and results-driven accountability measures have weakened their associations with kindergarten-5 classrooms. We draw on an ecological perspective to comprehensively detail an understanding of how educational policy—particularly the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2001) and Indiana Public Law (PL) 221 (1999)—influenced the interactions between elementary classrooms and public history institutions (Creswell, 1994; Teddlie & Tashakkori 2003). We recognize that elementary classrooms and public history institutions individually and collectively advance social education, and understand policies to be human-derived rules that yield both intended and unintended consequences for kindergarten-5 classrooms and public history organizations. Utilizing a mixed method design, we examined how respondents reported interactions with kindergarten-5 learners and educators, as well as the extent to which state public history organizations encouraged elementary schools to utilize their resources for extending social studies instruction outside of the classroom.

Taken as a whole, we make use of the perceptions of Indiana’s public history institutions to offer a distinct perspective regarding the status and quality of elementary social studies instruction across the state. In 2005, Vanfossen documented that Indiana kindergarten-5 teachers spent as little as 12 minutes per day teaching social studies. Given the low pedagogical status of elementary social studies across Indiana, it is probable that young learners rarely are afforded fruitful opportunities to explore key social ideas through collaborative efforts with public history institutions. Before describing the mode of inquiry and results, we delineate and apply an ecological model to understand the interactions among elementary classrooms, public history institutions, and educational policy.

An Ecological Perspective

Ecological perspectives situate human development in direct relationship with the social and physical settings in which young learners reside (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Ceci &
Hembrooke, 1995). Such perspectives maintain that reciprocal interactions between young learners and the persons, objects, and symbols in their immediate environment generate children’s ability, motivation, knowledge, and skill to engage in activities. Behaviors, which include problem solving and the acquisition of new knowledge and skill, are the product of personal characteristics, context, and the interaction between the two (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Ceci & Hembrooke, 1995). Four spheres of influence affecting human development: (1) microsystem, (2) mesosystem, (3) exosystem, and (4) macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) identified four. These spheres often are depicted as a series of concentric circles surrounding a child; the most immediate spheres are the microsystem and mesosystem, and the most remote are the exosystem and macrosystem (see appendix A).

The microsystem, the innermost level of the environment, refers to complex activities in the learners’ immediate surroundings. Structures inside this system include family, school, and community (e.g., elementary classrooms and public history institutions), and each holds objective and subjective elements that drive human development. Within the microsystem, the child’s interaction with symbols, languages, and interpersonal relationships in face-to-face settings permit engagement in sustained, progressively complex social studies oriented activities. The next level, the mesosystem, focuses on interactions between various structures within the microsystem, such as elementary classrooms working in tandem with public history institutions to enhance the ecology of a child’s social studies learning.

The exosystem encompasses those social settings that affect students’ experiences in immediate settings either formally or informally. The child need not be actively involved within the context to experience the impressions left by this system. A school’s organizational structure and course of action, over which young learners have little if any control, for example, may not only govern the range of young learners’ social studies encounters but also may determine the level of partnership with public history institutions. The outermost level of Brofenbrenner’s model, the macrosystem, is not a specific context. Instead, it refers to the values, laws, and customs of a particular environment (Ceci & Hembrooke, 1995).

As elements of children’s immediate surroundings, elementary classrooms and public history institutions facilitate young learners’ reciprocal interactions with other persons, objects, and symbols through a variety of media at hand (Zollinger Henderson & Atencio, 2007). These distinct learning systems, together, harness the energy, curiosity, and imagination of young children to support and encourage meaningful and contextualized social studies related experiences (Falk, 1999; Griffin, 2004; Rosenzweig & Thelan, 1998; Rowe, 2002; Wishart & Triggs, 2010). Each institution individually and collectively provides students with a sense of local history as well as a feeling of being in history. As such, children are able to recognize the contributions of local cultures to the economic, political, and social development of their state.

Impact on Student Learning

Research findings indicate that collaborations between kindergarten-5 classrooms and public history institutions enlarge the learning experiences of children by offering a successful means for teaching a variety of skills and subjects (Eakle, 2007; Heyman, 1997; Leinhardt, Crowley, & Knutson, 2002; Paris, 2002). Such partnerships ease the active participation of children in their learning by enabling them to manipulate real objects in a stimulating setting (Ramey-Gassert, Walberg III, & Walberg, 1994). Objects in museums speak to young learners in a unique and more visually evocative way than words (Kemp, 1996). Such behaviors serve to link conceptual learning back to the classroom. Moreover, object-centered learning in museums grounds students’ experiences of reality (Evans, Mull, & Poling, 2002).

Museum education research, in general, indicates the benefits of visits for young learners (Falk & Dierking, 1992; Piscitelli & Weier, Volume 6 Number 2 Summer 2011
Visits to museums, for example, lead to short-term and long-term learning gains (Wilde & Urhahne, 2008). Various activities, such as hands-on encounters with carefully designed art exhibits, provided touchstones for important social interactions and cognitive attainment (Piscitelli & Weier, 2002).

**Policy Context Affecting Social Studies Instruction**

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and Public Law (P.L.) 221 constitute the primary vehicles for the exercise of federal and state leadership in school accountability in Indiana. Indiana Academic Standards delineate what students should know and be able to do at each grade level and in each content area. Progress is measured by student proficiency rates on the state’s standardized test, the Indiana State Test of Educational Progress Plus (ISTEP+). English and mathematics are tested in grades 3-8. Science is tested in grades 4 and 6, and social studies in grades 5 and 7. Public Law 221 places Indiana schools into one of five categories based upon student passing rates on ISTEP+: exemplary progress, commendable progress, academic progress, academic watch or academic probation (P.L. 221, 1999).

No Child Left Behind (2002) requires schools to show adequate yearly progress (AYP) in the academic achievement of the overall student population and of identified student subgroups within the general population. Improvement is determined by student achievement and participation rates on ISTEP+ in English/language arts and mathematics and student attendance rates (for elementary and middle schools). A trickle of evidence suggests that strong accountability policies may, under some conditions, exhibit both intended and unintended consequences on curriculum and instruction (Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008). Such is the case with elementary level social studies.

**The Attenuation of Elementary Social Studies**

Recent findings have reinforced the perception that federal and several state accountability measures have effected K-5 social studies instruction (e.g., CEP, 2008; Leming, Ellington, & Schug, 2006; Vanfossen, 2005). Brown University’s Center on Education Policy (CEP) (2008) reported that, from 1999 to 2004, there occurred a 32% decrease in instructional time in social studies due to district-based decisions to increase instructional time for English language arts and mathematics. Since the inception of NCLB, Leming, Ellington, and Schug (2006) found that 23% of elementary school teachers reported spending less time on social studies. A across Indiana, Vanfossen (2005) found that social studies was becoming increasingly marginalized in the kindergarten-5 curriculum relative to other core subject areas (e.g., mathematics and reading). He cited three factors resulting in this marginalization: (1) perceived level of administrative support implementing state social studies standards; (2) lack of state-wide assessments for social studies at the elementary level; and (3) teachers’ lack of a clear understanding of the goals and mission of the social studies at the elementary level. Replicated three years later, Vanfossen and McGrew (2008) found that the first two factors reported in the earlier study also were present in the replication’s findings.

While the marginalization of kindergarten-5 social studies is not a recent trend (Houser, 1996), awareness of the impact federal and state educational policy is having on social studies learning within informal contexts is increasing. It is our contention that both federal and state educational policies have affected the collaborative nature of kindergarten-5 classrooms and public history institutions. During our initial inquiry, for example, the Historic Theater in downtown Charleston, WV, has seen attendance by students drop from over 10,000 in the late 1980s to 2,200 this past year. The Avampato Discovery Museum in Charleston also has seen its attendance by school groups drop by 50% this past year from previous years. The Oglebay Park, Schrader Environmental Education Center, in Wheeling also reported lower numbers this past year (Schwarz, 2006). Given the lack of statistically significant and substantial evidence, we attempted to further investigate the problem.

**Mode of Inquiry**
To investigate claims that federal and state educational policy has weakened the relationship between kindergarten-5 classrooms and public history organizations across Indiana, we posed the following questions:

- In an accountability landscape, in what ways has educational policy transformed the role and effectiveness of the state’s public history institutions?

How do public historians perceive the state of kindergarten-5 social studies?

A mixed method approach seemed advantageous, as it permitted us to use one method to verify and buttress findings stemming from the other method (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Using a quantitative approach, we could delineate the level of interaction between elementary classrooms and Indiana public history organizations. The qualitative approach, on the other hand, inserted and enhanced the voices of public history educators into the debate concerning the marginalization of elementary social studies instruction. By moving back and forth between inductive and deductive models of thinking, we added scope and breadth to the investigation (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

We developed an online survey instrument to capture participant responses (see Appendix B). This online, web-based system simplified the collection of data. Hypertext and spreadsheet formats eased access to data. The survey included 11 single-answer multiple response items, three multiple response, one multiple response matrix, one yes/no question, and six open-ended items. The instrument asked questions that spotlighted the mission and size of the particular public history institution and the capacity for incorporating the Indiana Academic Standards for Social Studies (IASSS) in carrying out its organizational mission. The survey also solicited responses regarding the nature and configuration of interactions between Indiana’s elementary classrooms and public history establishments. A second portion of the survey included questions about the institutional respondent’s educational background and experience in his/her current position. Six open-ended questions clarified earlier responses as well as solicited comments regarding kindergarten-5 social studies instruction in general.

In January of 2007, there were 158 members of the Association of Indiana Museums (AIM). Those represented both individual and institutional memberships. Each individual and institutional member of AIM was invited to complete the online survey. The survey’s URL was linked to the AIM website with an invitation to participate. After one month, a cover letter with the request to participate in the study was mailed to each member who did not respond to the initial invitation. A small stipend ($1.00) was used as an incentive to increase response rate. The final response rate was 62 out of 158, or 39.2%. Issues common to online surveys such as concerns about confidentiality or the means by which the survey goals were presented may explain the low response rate (Van Selm and Jankowski, 2006).

We used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0 to analyze data from the fixed-response items. To analyze data relating to the research questions, we calculated frequency distributions for all relevant variables. Correlation coefficients for ordinal scales, using Kendall’s Tau-b for ordinal data, and non-parametric analysis (Chi-square tests) were used to compare results from the various questions. Bivariate and multivariate analyses then were run to determine any significant association between variables.

Qualitative analysis sought to identify the structure and justifications provided by public history organizations to explain perceived changes in their relationships with elementary classrooms. Explanations, in this case, might have the power to expand and challenge social realities. This aspect of explanation is perhaps clearest in ordinary discourse justification, where revealing what’s really the case has a specific motivation (Anataki, 1988). We reviewed the open-ended responses. Rather than
conduct a line-by-line analysis for concepts, we used each respondent’s words to ascertain the relationship level between kindergarten-5 classrooms and public history institutions. First, we sought to reduce the complexity of these explanations to a small set of clear conceptual categories. This meant boiling down selected explanations to three dimensions of meaning: cause, justification, and effect. From the skeletal structure, we further evaluated the explanation to get across whatever social purpose the explanation sought to convey (Anataki, 1988).

Results

The majority of respondents affirmed the inherent value of utilizing objects and persons to connect students to the past. At the individual level, participants demonstrated an understanding that their institutions’ missions were to engage young learners in an appreciation of Indiana history, specifically, and the social sciences as a whole. Numerous institutions noted reciprocal interactions with elementary classrooms via social studies educational outreach. Such outreach programs were geared towards both regional third, fourth, and fifth graders and their teachers.

Numerous state public history institutions sought to actualize social studies learning by appealing to young learners in authentic, meaningful ways. This purpose was inserted into each public history institution’s overall mission statement. Approximately 48% of participants codified mission statements that sought to enhance, and have a bearing on, social education, particularly at the local level. Respondents recognized the usefulness of tailoring institutional mission statements and outreach programs to the state standards, the Indiana Academic Standards for Social Studies (IASSS). A majority of participants were very or somewhat familiar with the Indiana Academic Standards for Social Studies, and 36.36% consulted the Indiana Academic Standards for Social Studies (IASSS) when collaborating with kindergarten-5 classrooms. Almost half (49.09%) of the respondents either frequently or occasionally utilized IASSS to advertise their organizations, but only four respondents inserted these standards directly into their overall mission statement.

Defined Interactions with Kindergarten-5 Students

When collectively working with schools, state public history institutions—particularly historical museums—sought to expand kindergarten-5 students’ conceptual base, critical thinking skills, and creativity, thus allowing the integration of new social studies knowledge. In this case, 34.48% of the respondents reported seeing more than 1000 kindergarten-5 student visitors each year, compared to 13.79% seeing 500-999 student visitors each year. The slight majority (51.72%) of responding institutions saw fewer than 500 student visitors each year. Examples of student interactions reported by participating organizations included reading programs, home visits, displays for schools, and activities at local festivals. Respondent institutions also were asked to describe any changes in their interactions with students over the past five years (2002-2007). Of the respondents, 29.31% reported that their interactions increased and 29.31% stayed the same. 36.21% reported a decrease in kindergarten-5 student interactions in the past five years. Thus, over 58% of respondents reported either no change or an increase in their overall kindergarten-5 student interactions.

Defined Interactions with Kindergarten-5 Teachers

Researchers have demonstrated that teachers are important in supporting student learning in social studies by understanding content and using effective teaching strategies (Darling-Hammond, 2008; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Thornton, 2005). Several state public history institutions sought to provide teachers with resources and capabilities to implement genuine social studies instruction. In terms of teacher visits, 10.64% of the institutional respondents saw more than 200 kindergarten-5 teachers each year, with a majority of respondent institutions seeing fewer
than 25 kindergarten-5 teacher visitors each year. Responding organizations listed kindergarten-5 teacher interactions such as organizing focus groups to determine future programs; work with local university pre-service (student) teachers; presentations at state-wide professional development conferences and events for local educators in conjunction with special exhibitions. Since 2005, 20% of state public history organizations surveyed reported a decrease in kindergarten-5 teacher interactions.

For this study, a significant majority of respondents noted tours as the prominent type of classroom/institution interaction. Approximately 65% mentioned that they provide classrooms with curriculum materials. What was interesting, however, was the number of institutions reporting the use of their expertise in content or teaching strategies. Only 35% of respondents identified working with schools as content or instructional experts, while 38.3% acknowledged working with elementary teachers as content or instructional experts. Figure 1 further delineates defined interaction types with K-5 students and teachers. Figure 2 shows perceived changes in interactions with K-5 students and K-5 teachers.

**Figure 1. Comparison of Interaction Types**

![Comparison of Interaction Types](chart1.png)

**Figure 1.** Bar graph indicating levels of interaction between kindergarten-5 learners and educators and public history institutions.
Where are the Kindergarten-5 Teachers and Students?

In terms of describing possible reasons for a decrease in kindergarten-5 teacher interactions, the most common reason given by responding public history institutions was the lack of administrative support for these kinds of activities, with a general moratorium on field trips (36.84%), and rising costs (31.58%) following. More than one-fifth (21.05%) of the institutional respondents reported that a lack of instructional time for social studies might be a possible reason. One organization perceived that teachers lacked instructional time and that school policy regarding field trips served to crowd out visits to state public history institutions. Numerous respondents utilized comments from educators to justify their claims. A local public history organization, for example, noted that:

We have comments from classroom teachers who say that the requirements placed on teachers now make it impossible to plan special activities. Many say they are required to stay in the classroom to meet accountability standards and prepare for all the evaluations that are now required. Those teachers who have been in the classroom for several years feel that recent changes in schools are taking away from the students the opportunity to truly enjoy learning new things. Hands-on experiences and special events that can develop so many desires to learn more are often left out of the school experience. Students now see school as a place where you have to continue passing tests and school is no longer an exciting place.

This respondent’s explanation features a specific cause for a decrease in K-5 teacher interactions, a justification for the claim, and the effect. Here, educational reform measures create an intolerable instructional situation for both public history institutions and kindergarten-5 teachers. As such, the teachers to whom the quotation refers, indicate elementary level students lack authentic, meaningful social studies experiences. What is telling with this quote is the justification for this claim and effect.
66.67% of the public history institutions observed these reform efforts as having no impact on teacher professional development activities. A lack of effort on the teacher’s part to utilize museum resources is a major factor respondents pointed to as a possible cause for the decrease in activities with kindergarten-5 classrooms, which is reflected in the following responses:

We charge no fee for any student group to visit our museum or work at the museum on special projects. We see this as an unused resource that teachers are passing up. Each year we have the entire third grade from our local school coming to see us through their study of local history. As the teachers change, we are seeing students coming less prepared to learn about our community and feel that soon these classes may be left out on this chance to learn so much and gain pride in our community. Some of the school groups who once visited from other communities now have no opportunity to visit. We are finding some small group work increasing as students need to use our facility for special projects, but we see fewer teachers who wish to work with us to develop materials or learning experiences.

Let us concentrate on the justifications for the claim in the quotation Indiana kindergarten-5 teachers are not interested in the resources state public history organizations afford to unpack possible causes for the decline in collaborative activities. Specifically, two justifications, lack of knowledge and teacher turnover, structured the claim. This organization viewed an absence of fees as ideal for reaching out to state elementary level teachers. The respondent then added an additional justification layer to the claim by suggesting that teacher turnover leads to a lack of knowledge regarding the educational utility of the organization.

**Perceived Impact of Federal and State Education Policy**

The public history institutions were asked to choose reasons they felt might have been a cause of the changes they were reporting in kindergarten-5 student and teacher interactions. Respondents were allowed to choose as many responses as they wanted. Categories included a moratorium on field trips, costs, lack of administrative support, and lack of instructional time for social studies. Since 2007, 60% of responding institutions recognized that school-based moratoriums on field trips were affecting interaction levels with kindergarten-5 educators and their students. Almost 30% of respondents observed an increase in their interactions with students. Three institutions, in particular, noted that their increase in student interaction levels were due to the implementation of federal and state accountability measures.

**Unintended Consequences**

Restrictive Curriculum. Respondents were asked if the change they had seen in kindergarten-5 classroom interactions might have been caused by recent educational reforms such as NCLB and Indiana’s PL 221. There was a significant association between respondents reporting a decrease in student interactions and those reporting the possibility of school reforms causing the decrease \( F(1,61) = 23.690; p=.000 \). While this represents a very small number of respondents reporting this kind of association, the data provide an invitation to explore this relationship further. Almost a quarter of the respondents noted the lack of social studies instructional time as one reason for a decline in student interactions. The most frequently given reason under the other category was more attention to reading and math (28.5% of other responses).

Redeployment of Resources.

To meet the goals of NCLB and Indiana PL 221, federal and state departments of education have shifted resources to improve achievement in literacy and mathematics. According to respondents, such actions also have affected the
level of interactions with elementary classrooms. No Child Left Behind legislation, in particular, has limited the interest of educators and hampered opportunities for students to learn through the arts. High stakes testing associated with both policies have served to limit the available time for visits. One organization suggested that NCLB coupled with a lack of school funding has changed the interaction level between elementary classrooms and public history institutions. The respondent suggested that the lack of school funding coupled with NCLB compelled kindergarten-5 teachers to decrease the number of field trips and classroom presentations. The respondent did not believe that NCLB alone was to blame. This respondent justified the claim by noting his prior teaching experience. Two respondents, however, saw an increase in the number of home schooled students visiting their facilities. Due to NCLB and Indiana PL 221, one respondent adopted a radically different approach to interacting with schools. Since field trips are a luxury, tours and programs must constantly be upgraded to maintain the interest of both teachers and students. Though the respondent described the situation as nerve-wracking, it seemed to work for the organization. He concluded that we have to supplement often with summer visitation, family events, and special events.

The Role of Professional Development

Several public history organizations noted increased professional development opportunities as a means for halting the attenuation of elementary social studies instruction. One respondent, for example, noted that:

Teachers need an opportunity to be trained to see what is available as resources that will meet the state standards, offer great learning experiences for students, and create a keen interest in their students who will one day need to become life-long learners. Social Studies has become a study that can be eliminated when time is demanded by other subjects. Teachers need to realize just how big a part the study of Social Studies plays into the development of good citizens. By leaving out great Social Studies experiences, teachers need to be made aware that their students are really being ‘left behind.’

In this example, teachers were rarely given the opportunity to develop the pedagogical skills necessary for instructional enterprise in accountability topography. Because social studies has become marginalized, Indiana K-5 teachers hesitantly recognize the role social studies plays in citizenship development. The effect, as described by this respondent, is the leaving behind of informed, reasoned decision makers and effective citizens.

Discussion and Conclusions

Our use of an ecological perspective sought to bring into relief how Indiana’s public history institutions in order to advance social education. Findings represent perceptions held by institutions with some facilities supporting their claims with institutional data. Almost all of the responding Indiana public history organizations acknowledged their role within a local system of social studies development for young learners. As an element of the microsystem, Indiana’s public history institutions recognized that as structures inside young learners’ immediate surroundings, it was important to provide an environment utilizing objects and persons to increase the historical knowledge of young learners. To ensure the organizations were having an impact on the learner, these institutions sought to explicitly connect their mission statements to learner needs and interests. Mission statements not only defined each organization’s fundamental social studies purpose, philosophy, and values but clarified the essence of the organization’s place within the microsystem.

Findings indicated that, as part of the mesosystem, Indiana’s public history institutions interacted with kindergarten-5 classrooms in a range of settings and experiences to promote meaningful social education for young learners. Whether the interaction occurred through curriculum materials, by serving as content or instructional experts, by providing tours, or by
speaking to individual classrooms, the state’s public history entities sought to increase how children encountered the social studies. Interestingly, when we separated Indiana’s public history institutions’ perceived interactions with kindergarten-5 students from those of their teachers, we discovered that more respondents reported a decrease in student interactions as compared to teachers. This would suggest that a number of Indiana’s kindergarten-5 students are not experiencing the cognitive and social benefits affiliated with museum visits. Moreover, numerous respondents cited boosting professional development as a means for augmenting both student and teacher interactions. The data would suggest that while kindergarten-5 teacher interactions with Indiana’s state public history museums are low, these teachers’ are finding ways to bring the public history institution experience to the classroom.

An ecological perspective demonstrated both unintended and intended consequences. The findings indicate a school’s organizational structure and policies may have an effect on kindergarten-5 classrooms-public history institution partnerships. As an example of the exosystem at work, respondents noted moratoriums on field trips and transportation costs as factors that were diminishing their relationship with kindergarten-5 classrooms. In an age when budgets are being cut, schools have to adapt to a new reality. Despite the evidence that field trips to public history institutions enhance the cognitive and social development of students, Indiana’s public history organizations felt as though school policy failed to acknowledge these visits value in helping students achieve success on high stakes tests.

The federal and state educational policy initiatives of the past five years, No Child Left Behind (2001), and Indiana Public Law 221 (1999) appear to have changed the relationship between kindergarten-5 classrooms and state public history organizations. These changes have manifested themselves in two ways as reported by our sample. First, public history institutions are more aware of state testing requirements and the need to link programs to the Indiana Academic Standards. Second, changes are perceived in kindergarten-5 student and teacher interactions with Indiana’s public history organizations. Some of these perceptions may be explained by structural and policy realignments within schools, but several respondents recognized that a greater emphasis was placed on reading, writing, and mathematics. A shift in curriculum emphasis was viewed as not only serving to marginalize elementary level social studies instruction, but the relationships between kindergarten-5 classrooms and state public history institutions. Now, let us return to our original question, are there any children left in the Indiana’s public history institutions? The answer to the question is not as obvious as we thought. It was assumed that stringent accountability policies restricted kindergarten-5 student access to the resources and expertise granted by public history organizations. To our surprise, results indicated that a majority of Indiana’s public history institutions perceived either no change or an increase in student visits. Almost one-third of respondents recognized an increase in K-5 student interactions as a result of federal and state educational policy. These findings suggest that K-5 learners still are actively engaging historical resources across the state. On the surface, it appears kindergarten-5 teachers recognize the inherent value associated with state public history institutions, particularly as a means for meeting state social studies standards. Whereas Indiana kindergarten-5 teachers may not invest much instructional time in social studies education (Vanfos sen, 2005), the data suggest many recognize the importance of maintaining a collaborative relationship with state public history institutions. What is missing, though, is whether there were within-category shifts of kindergarten-5 student interactions. Our investigation did not analyze such within-category shifts. Further examination may shed light on a change in the role and effectiveness for public history organizations throughout Indiana.

What of those institutions reporting a decline in kindergarten-5 student interactions? To some degree, we suspect that the marginalization of elementary level social studies impacted their
levels of kindergarten-5 student interactions. Yet, respondents also noted the lack of social studies professional development, fuel costs, and a general moratorium on field trips as plausible causes. In an age of dwindling resources, it might be difficult to establish the extent of federal and state educational policy influence on collaborations between kindergarten-5 classrooms and public history institutions. As schools continue to downsize personnel and staff benefits, while attempting to meet AYP, their ability to maintain meaningful associations with state history institutions is not a high priority. At best, our findings may symbolize a sign of the times, doing less with less.

Some participants felt as though lack of professional development opportunities, fuel costs, and the attenuation of elementary social studies exacerbated their low interaction levels with kindergarten-5 teachers. It seems, though, that the levels of kindergarten-5 teacher interactions were at best tangentially related to our original question. To that end, we call for additional research to further investigate the interactions of kindergarten-5 classrooms and public history organizations.

Federal and state education reform efforts appear to be effecting the relationships between kindergarten-5 schools and state public history organization. Some public history institutions have found ways to maintain, or even increase, their involvement with schools. These successful programs should be described with techniques and strategies shared with others. Models bringing together educators from public history organizations and schools should be replicated so that these important community institutions, public history organizations and schools are not lost in the educational reform fervor currently underway.

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Appendix A

Ecological Spheres of Influence on Human Development

- Macrosystem
- Exosystem
- Mesosystem
- Microsystem
- Learner
The Impact of Federal and State Education Policy on the Relationship Between K-5 Classrooms and Public History Institutions in Indiana

This survey is designed to determine the impact education policies have on the relationship between Indiana K-5 social studies classrooms and state's public history institutions.

This project will gather base-line data about how school reform policies such as No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB 2001) and Public Law 221 (1999), Indiana’s school accountability law, have changed the way schools use the resources and services your organization offers. What we learn from this study could help your organization interact more effectively with K-5 schools. The questionnaire should take no more than 12 minutes to complete. The name of your organization is being collected in order to help insure that responses from as many public history organizations may be collected. Once the data is collected and analyzed, all data will be destroyed. Specific responses will not be available to the public.

Again, thank you for your valuable time.

Chris McGrew  
Graduate Research Assistant  
Ackerman Center  
Purdue University

1. In the space below, please indicate the name of your organization.

2. Does your organization have a specific mission to support K-5 education?
   - O Yes  - O No

3. If you answered (yes) in #2, please briefly state the mission in the text box below.
4. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following: How familiar are you with the Indiana Academic Standards for Social Studies (IASSS)?

- Very familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Vaguely familiar
- I know nothing about the IASSS

5. To what degree does the IASSS for the K-5 classroom influence your planning and programming for visits by K-5 teachers or students?

- I frequently consult the IASSS when planning for classroom or teacher visits.
- I occasionally consult the IASSS when planning for classroom or teacher visits.
- I rarely consult the IASSS when planning for classroom or teacher visits.
- I almost never consult the IASSS when planning for classroom or teacher visits.

6. This survey is designed to learn about the interaction between your organization and K-5 classrooms. Although non-organized individual or family visits are important, please only report on organized K-5 school visits. What kinds of programs does your organization provide for student groups?

- ○ Tours
- ○ Curriculum material
- ○ Guest presentations or speakers bureau
- ○ Expertise in content or teaching strategies
- ○ Others

7. If you answered others in question #6, please describe any other types of interaction that you have with student groups.

8. Approximately how any students participate in the types of interactions described in questions #6 and #7 each year?

- ○ More than 1000
- ○ 500-999
- ○ 250-499
- ○ 100-249
- ○ Fewer than 99

9. How have these types of student interactions changed in the past five years?

- ○ It has increased.
- ○ It is about the same.
- ○ It has decreased.
- ○ I don't know.

10. If you indicated changes in question #9, please choose any and all of the reasons below that you feel may have caused the change.

- ○ Lack of support from school administration.
The Impact of Federal and State Education Policy on the Relationship Between K-5 Class...

11. If you answered other reasons, please describe other reasons for the change described in question #10.

12. Now considering individual teacher visits, or organized teacher training activities, which types of activities does your organization provide for K-5 teachers?

- Tours
- Curriculum material
- Guest presentations or speakers bureau
- Expertise in content or teaching strategies
- Other

13. If you answered other in question #12, please describe the kinds of interactions you have with K-5 teachers.

14. Approximately how many teachers participate in the types of interactions described in questions #12 and #13 each year?

- More than 200
- 100-199
- 50-99
- 25-49
- Fewer than 25

15. How have these types of teacher interactions changed in the past five years?

- It has increased.
- It is about the same.
- It has decreased.
- I don’t know.

16. If you indicated changes in question #15, Please indicate any reasons that may have contributed to this change.

- Lack of support from school administration.
- Lack of instructional time for social studies.
- Moratorium on all field trips.
- Limited substitution teacher pay for the school.
The Impact of Federal and State Education Policy on the Relationship Between K-5 Class...

(17) If you marked other reasons in question #16, please indicate a reason in text box below.

(18) In your opinion, what impact have recent school accountability laws such as No Child Left Behind and Indiana's Public Law 221 had on the various types of interactions that your organization has with K-5 schools?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>visits by students</th>
<th>increasing</th>
<th>decreasing</th>
<th>no change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>visits by K-5 teachers or other K-5 educators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>requests for classroom presentations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>requests for classroom speakers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visits to your website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>orders of various classroom materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(19) Please indicate any other comments that you would like to make about question #18.

(20) Which best describes the position that you hold in your organization?

- Director
- Assistant Director
- Curator
- Director of Educational programs
- Docent
- Tour Director
- Education Director
- Other

(21) How long have you been in the position described in #20?

- less than one year
- 1-3 years
- 4-7 years
- 8-10 years
- over 10 years

(22) How large is the overall paid and volunteer staff in your organization?
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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