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## ABSTRACT

This paper presents the findings of an exploratory case analysis of three beginning social studies teachers regarding how their personal theorizing impacted their instructional decision making and classroom actions as newly inducted teachers. In addition, how the teachers' personal theorizing evolved as a result of their first year of experience is also presented. During their pre-service experiences, the teachers identified an operational set of personal practice theories (PPTs) that guided their respective practices. The PPTs were used as the theoretical constructs from which to determine the relationship between personal theorizing and practice. The findings indicate that each teacher attempted to utilize their PPTs to guide their first year of teaching. Furthermore, for two of the three teachers, their PPTs largely impacted their instructional decision making. Finally, all three individuals experienced further development and refinement of their instructional beliefs as a result of their first year of teaching. Two of the three teachers continuously refined their PPTs in an effort to improve practice, while the third teacher developed a new set of instructional beliefs to fit her given instructional setting. (Contains 20 references.) (SM)

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## **The Impact of Personal Theorizing on Beginning Teaching: A Case Analysis of Three Social Studies Teachers**

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present the findings of an exploratory case analysis of three beginning social studies teachers regarding how their personal theorizing impacted their instructional decision making and classroom actions as newly inducted teachers. In addition, how the teachers' personal theorizing evolved as a result of their first year of experience is also presented. During their preservice experiences, the teachers identified an operational set of personal practical theories (PPT's) that guided their respective practices. The PPT's were used as the theoretical constructs from which to determine the relationship between personal theorizing and practice.

The findings indicate that each teacher attempted to utilize their PPT's to guide their first year of teaching. Furthermore, for two of the three teachers, their PPT's largely impacted their instructional decision-making. Finally, all three individuals experienced further development and refinement of their instructional beliefs as a result of their first year of teaching. Two of the three teachers continuously refined their PPT's in an effort to improve practice while the third teacher developed a new set of instructional beliefs to fit her given instructional setting.

## **The Impact of Personal Theorizing on Beginning Teaching:**

### **A Case Analysis of Three Social Studies Teachers**

#### **Introduction**

A large number of studies have contributed to teacher thinking research and have helped the educational community's understanding of various aspects of teacher cognition, problem solving, and decision making. These studies have advanced the notion of teachers as thoughtful professionals and have illustrated the complex nature of teachers' decision-making processes (Cornett, 1990a; Clark, 1988; Peterson, 1988). Furthermore, there is a growing body of knowledge that has examined how teacher beliefs have impacted curricular decision making and how teachers perceive their roles in the pre-active, interactive, and post-active phases of instruction (Bullough & Baughman, 1997; Thornton, 1994; Louden, 1991; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988).

However, fewer studies exist regarding how teachers acquire the skills and dispositions related to becoming thoughtful practitioners through the understanding and application of their instructional beliefs. As Ross (1992) indicated, the process of becoming an effective teacher is more complex than simply acquiring and implementing the cultural knowledge that exists within educational settings. Instead, the teacher development process may benefit from teacher analyses that include teacher reflection and personal theorizing as components of the inquiries. Gold (1996) suggested that such beginning educator support should include a personalized approach that encourages teachers to develop self-efficacy and to come to terms with their own personal and professional needs as well as learning ways of meeting these needs (p. 587). This process encourages instructors to identify the meaning related to their own teaching and develop their own style of instruction.

Pape (1992) further supported the assumption of understanding personal practice by suggesting that teachers construct their own knowledge and must in some manner make sense of new experiences in light of existing knowledge. Often, when facing discord, teachers utilize a personal guiding theory based on their unique beliefs, understandings, and assumptions that represent an individual's explanation and justification of experience (p. 78). Pape's examination of an intern's beliefs during her preservice teaching indicated that prior experience impacted the evolution of teaching theories, building what Pape described as a framework against which actions were justified and explained (p. 79). Connelly and Clandinin labeled this type of teacher understanding as the personal practical knowledge of teachers and defined this as how teachers reconstruct past experiences and consider future intentions when solving current instructional problems.

If systematic reflection and personal theorizing components are used within the induction process, then such examinations should include the consideration of which constructs, or interpretations about the new instructional setting are permeable and which are impermeable. As Kelly (1963) noted, once individuals experience new situations and gain new information, then interpretations about given situations may change (permeable). Similarly, individuals may also hold beliefs and assumptions about situations that will never change no matter what circumstances are experienced (impermeable). With that in mind, then how do new social studies teachers make sense of their new setting as a result of their personal and practical experiences? What contextual obstacles do new social studies teachers face and how do these obstacles influence their instructional beliefs? Finally, how do beliefs about teaching and learning evolve because of initial teaching experience?

The purpose of this paper is to present the findings of an exploratory case analysis of three beginning social studies teachers regarding how their personal theorizing impacted their instructional decision making and classroom actions as newly inducted social studies teachers. In addition, how the teachers' personal theorizing about teaching and learning evolved as a result of their first year of experience is presented. The findings offer teacher educators, and specifically those within the social studies, the opportunity to better understand how the personal theorizing process can assist beginning teachers. The results also help illustrate how beginning social studies teachers perceive their roles within the classroom as they apply the values, attitudes, interests, skills, and knowledge developed as preservice candidates in their new settings. How new teachers use personal theorizing in their classrooms may additionally help teacher educators in the planning, development, and implementation of preservice programs that enhance teacher cognition and decision making.

### Methodology

The methodological approach of this study was grounded in Lincoln and Guba's (1985) research design phases for conducting naturalistic inquiry. The focus of this study examined the following two points: 1) how the personal theorizing of three beginning social studies teachers impacted their instructional actions as first-year teachers and 2) how the beginning teachers' personal theorizing about teaching and learning evolved as a result of their new experiences.

The term personal theorizing within this research is described as the process undertaken by teachers in an effort to identify the conceptual structures and visions that provide them with the reasons for acting as they do and for choosing the teaching activities and curriculum materials that are most effective for student learning (Sanders & McCutcheon, 1986). Grounded within the personal theorizing process is the identification of a set of theoretical principles or

propositions that provide the foundation for and guide teachers' decisions and actions. Cornett (1990b) labeled these principles as personal practical theories (PPT's) because they represent contributions grounded in both the teacher's personal experience (outside the classroom) and practical experience (inside the classroom). They are called theories because they are a systematically developed and analyzed set of beliefs. Each of the participants had formally examined their personal theorizing as a part of their preservice education. The participants had identified an operational set of PPT's that guided their practice and was grounded in the quality attributes of teaching and learning identified within the social studies education research field.

The qualitative paradigm was selected for this research because, as Berg (1998) suggested, certain elements of symbolism, meaning, and understanding (the teachers' decisions, actions, and classroom outcomes) usually require consideration of the researcher's own perceptions and subjective apprehensions. Furthermore, the utilization of case study methodology was selected because case design provides an in-depth understanding of interactive educational settings (teacher/student interactions within the classroom) and it's meaning for those involved (Merriam, 1998).

The three participant teachers were selected by purposeful sampling based on their relationship with the researcher and their preservice experience with personal theorizing. All three had met the qualifications suggested by Cornett (1990b) and Elbaz (1983) for sample selections within teacher belief investigations. These qualifications included the ability and willingness to reflect openly, the possession of a high degree of reflectivity, and the demonstration of effective teaching practices.

## The Teacher Participants

### Shelly:

Shelly decided to enter a professional education program after holding a variety of career positions. After earning her BA degree in history as a non-traditional student and dismissing the possibility of entering law school, Shelly turned to teaching. Her decision was strongly impacted by the frequent discussions with her daughter, an elementary school teacher, about methods for motivating children or strategies to use within the classroom. Once decided, Shelly completed her MA in secondary social studies education. It was during her MA program that the researcher first met Shelly as a student and advisee.

Shelly's first teaching position was a grade six assignment in an urban middle school located in a southeastern U.S. city. Shelly was assigned to teach world geography as part of a four-person middle grades team of teachers. The school population was approximately 1000 students and nearly 90 percent of the students received free or reduced lunches.

Shelly's initial view of teaching was quite optimistic as she perceived social studies teaching from the paradigm of the great connector perspective or what Goodman and Adler (1985) described as social studies as an integrative core. She described the discipline as an adventure due to its limitless scope of content and freedom of curricular choices. Shelly used the term social studies over specific content disciplines, such as history or geography because, as she described, "Social studies teachers teach the world with information from all subjects including history, art, economics, psychology, geography, technology, language arts, mathematics, and more." Shelly's entry into the classroom was additionally boosted by the belief that social studies teachers are free from the limited constraints of the prescribed curriculum in that state-mandated testing did not apply to the social studies in her particular state.



Gary:

Like Shelly, Gary was also a non-traditional entry into the field of K-12 education. Prior to his entry into the secondary social studies MA program, Gary was a commissioned officer in the U.S. Navy and had recently retired after twenty years of service. Gary was proud of his many naval accomplishments and commendations. However, he commented that there were many ways that one could serve his country and that, after serving in the military, he said, “I wish to continue serving my country now as a public school teacher. I have much to share and give to the young people in my community.”

Gary’s first teaching assignment was in a suburban middle school teaching sixth grade world geography. Gary was also assigned to a traditional four-person middle school team. His school was situated in a typical middle-class bedroom community servicing a large southeastern U.S. city. The school population consisted of approximately 1100 students.

Gary viewed his teaching role as helping students perform at their best. He characterized his quality high school teachers as ones that blended creativity with a strong content base. Gary stressed the importance of content and that making content relevant for students is a central task for social studies teachers. Gary also added that teachers should focus on establishing respect and dignity for both learners and teachers as a way to improve what he termed, “citizenship within the classroom.”

Mary:

Mary was the most traditional preservice candidate of the three participants. Mary had worked for 10 years in a previous career before deciding to obtain her undergraduate degree in secondary social studies education. Her early viewpoints regarding teaching were well grounded in her own classroom experiences. She saw herself as an individual and emphasized this by

saying, “Every student needs attention. I certainly did when I was younger. As a teacher, I will strive for that.” She added, “I will develop their talents so they won’t waste valuable time like I did when figuring out what they want to do in life.” Mary’s initial approach to social studies teaching was focused on helping individuals become better people and contributing to society through their actions both during and after their formal schooling.

Mary’s first teaching position was in a parochial school setting. Mary was assigned to teach multiple grades levels (6-8) in a K-8 school. Her content preparations included world history, American history, and religious studies. Her school population consisted of approximately 600 students (with approximately 110 within the 6-8 grade setting) from predominately middle to upper-middle level income families.

### Guiding Research Questions

The researcher used the following questions to help develop and guide the research process:

- Is the teacher’s awareness of PPT’s implicit or explicit and how is this awareness used by the teacher regarding classroom practices?
- Does the teacher’s curricular and instructional decisions support his/her existing PPT’s?
- Does he/she believe that PPT’s are influencing practice or is the first year of practice influencing the development of new teaching beliefs?
- How are PPT’s changing as a result of experience?

Once clearly identified trends were evident, the researcher attempted to corroborate and refute the initial findings as they related to the overall research focus. In total, the researcher made three visits to each classroom (90 total on-site hours over a five-month period during spring 2001 semester). In addition, the researcher conducted three formal interviews with each

teacher. The findings and subsequent analysis relied on the researcher's field observations, transcribed interview data, and artifacts collected from each setting.

Three main logistical issues existed regarding this study. The first was related to the number of site visits available to the researcher. Due to geographical proximity, the researcher was only able to make three visits to each of the participant's classrooms during the research period. Regarding the second issue, since the researcher had previously supervised and worked with the participants, there was a concern with the established relationships between those involved in the research setting. Although these relationships were necessary due to the research foci, it was important to maintain the confidentiality of the participants throughout and after the study. To date, the confidentiality of the teachers remains in effect and the names used in this paper are pseudonyms. Finally, there emerged an issue related Shelly's instructional effectiveness during the period of data collection. As indicated, she was included in the study's sample, in part, because she had demonstrated quality practices during her preservice program. However, Shelly was unable to replicate this level of teaching success, as determined by herself and the researcher, within her first year of teaching. Realizing the ethical complications, the researcher offered Shelly a number of alternatives regarding her participation, including encouraging her to withdrawal from the study. After consideration, Shelly chose to remain a participant providing the confidentiality status remained intact. She summarized her decision to the researcher by stating, "I realize this year was unexpected. It helps having you in the class. It keeps me focused and I want to see what you see because that gives me something to work from if I'm going to help these students." As part of the study's member-checking processes, Shelly (as well as the other participants, respectively) was provided full access to the field collection

notes and her interview responses. Shelly has since indicated that she has used this information as part of her on-going reflection process.

### Identification of PPT's and their Manifestation in Practice

#### Shelly identified her PPT's as follows:

- 1) The classroom should be a positive learning environment;
- 2) The teacher should be the role model for conduct and enthusiasm in the classroom;
- 3) All students are capable of learning;
- 4) The teacher must present well-prepared lessons;
- 5) The teacher must work for improvement;
- 6) There is life beyond the classroom, live it.

Shelly viewed theory one as essential due to her constructivist philosophy regarding how students learn. She perceived a positive learning environment as an umbrella that protected student involvement and created a classroom where students want to and are encouraged to participate. As Shelly described, "Since students learn well when they feel that teachers care about them personally and educationally, teachers must apply their understanding of human needs so that there is collaboration between teachers and students." The positive learning environment would, according to Shelly, be manifested in how the teacher organizes learning opportunities. Shelly said that these teacher actions could be evidenced in such instructional practices as cooperative learning, group problem solving, learning centers, self-directed research, and learning simulations.

According to Shelly, she did have a difficult time implementing practice representing her first PPT and her assertion was documented by the findings. Shelly's teaching emphasis was more often focused on the management of student behaviors rather than the management of

student learning. Shelly spent a majority of time in class correcting negative behaviors and refocusing student attention in an effort to keep students on task. Shelly did not view her class as a positive environment for either herself or her students. When asked why she felt that the classroom had a negative atmosphere, Shelly replied, “We have kids literally going up and down the walls here and you cannot be a kinder, gentler, pleasant, and sweet spoken teacher.” Instead, Shelly said, “You must hold back, sit down, and get to work. It’s to keep some modicum of order so that maybe you can get through something today.”

The researcher did identify that Shelly was in many ways teaching to two distinct sets of students within each classroom. When interacting with this separate group of students (the subset), Shelly did foster a more positive environment focused on student learning. Here, anywhere from four to seven students were grouped towards the middle of each class. For the most part, they were on task and attempted to complete their assignments. Furthermore, they would often ask questions regarding their assignments and Shelly would speak first to this group when introducing or reviewing material. However, nearly all examples of student activities within the subset were transmission-based and emphasized factual knowledge. Only a limited number of examples were offered by Shelly that stressed collaboration between the teacher and students in an effort to actively involve students in their learning. Shelly did recognize that she taught to a subset of students within each class. She described the subset when she said,

I realize I have students in this inner-classroom that are trying and want to learn. I also feel that they are getting short-changed. I absolutely believe that. If I were given the option to say one thing to their parents it would be to put them in an environment where they can really learn something.

Theory two, that focused on the teacher as a role model for conduct and enthusiasm, was defined by Shelly as how teachers show students they care for them through their actions. Shelly further insisted that teachers should demonstrate care not only for students, but for the course

content as well. Shelly emphasized that to show care, teachers must shift from managing students to managing contexts and must clearly establish conditions that define the teacher's commitment to quality. In this setting, according to Shelly, "Students must feel safe and free from embarrassment and understand that what they are studying has value. Furthermore, by using feedback and praise, students should be able to feel that they are succeeding."

There did exist numerous examples of Shelly demonstrating care and concern for her students. Shelly always started each class (the entire group, not just the subset) by welcoming students and asking students how their day was going or complimenting appearances or behaviors. Shelly also stressed during her classes why the study of geography was such an important element for students and made, although less frequently, efforts to connect the curriculum to current affairs.

However, because of her efforts at maintaining classroom order, Shelly would frequently demonstrate practices that did not support theory two. Shelly stressed the difficulty she encountered in her efforts to be a model for conduct when she said,

I do struggle with the issue of respect. I want to be the model of respect but can't, because I have to react in certain ways. There are certain times when I treat them nicely, supporting what I believe about PPT number two and they just ignore me or pretend I'm not there. So, I give them a yell and get their attention. Then I can go back to being nice again, back to the model I want to be. That's fine for a couple of minutes. Then they go back to their own agenda again. So, I have to bring them back again. This is a constant reaction that takes place in the classes.

Shelly stressed the connection between theories one and two by indicating that student actions had a large impact on her own classroom behaviors. Shelly emphasized that her expectations entering the year were consistent with theories one and two and that she offered students the type of environment supporting these theories. She added that she soon reacted to student behaviors

by becoming less constructive and more structured once she realized how classroom interactions had developed.

Shelly originally described theory three, stating that all students are capable of learning, as an essential belief because students must understand that they can indeed reach the learning standards set forth in the classroom. Shelly emphasized that teachers must realize that learning may be acquired in different ways and at different rates, but it will occur. However, any success gained by students, according to Shelly, was the result of how the teacher organizes and structures the classroom. In essence, Shelly felt that all students could learn, but the teacher's role in this learning is paramount. Shelly added, "It is incumbent upon the teacher to constantly look for methods and practices that will enable students to achieve." Thus, Shelly's third PPT was highly connected with her fourth PPT, which focused on presenting well-prepared lessons. Shelly explained her practical approach to preparing lessons when she said,

We need to work hard at planning. Yes, it's intellectual, but it's also plain hard work. We need to get in there and prepare for our kids. I need to work hard to understand my kids and then react to them. Prepare what they need as individuals. Do it in a way that, if needed, they can touch it and feel it.

Shelly's classroom actions did not always support her beliefs related to student learning and how teachers needed to organize and structure experiences for students based upon their individual needs. When asked about this, Shelly replied, "Something has to give. I have the demands of the state, the district, the curriculum, and large classes." Shelly then added, "Yes, I believe they can learn. But how long is that going to take to teach them? I don't have that luxury."

Yet, Shelly often talked about select students and how they made large gains in learning during the school year. When doing so, she often mentioned students who were a part of the

inner-classroom, or subset of students. The following example described by Shelly illustrated one such student,

I have helped her make the switch to learning. I found out how she likes to learn. She does not want to discuss; she's not verbal-linguistic. Instead, she likes to go through the book and work out her own special notes, very rigid. She does better with the structure of the book. If I ask her what's in the book, she can absolutely tell me what's in there. But, she has to do it her way. So, I plan for her and how she best learns. Now her work is beautiful. What's interesting is that she is failing her other classes, but here, she's my star. I love her.

Shelly's planning (theory four) did support her efforts of teaching to the subset of students. She was focused on developing activities that helped sustain the learning of those students that demonstrated significant growth (the subset) while developing strategies to manage the classroom behaviors of those students not making sufficient learning efforts (remainder of the class). These efforts, although more implicit than explicit, did become manifested within her classroom actions. Shelly often offered two sets of activities for students. Even though both sets were generally grounded in the transmission of knowledge, the set offered to students within the subset were more interactive and provided students an opportunity to use dialogue to ask questions and obtain help. In addition, Shelly's demeanor with the subset better supported her belief that teachers act as role models for conduct and enthusiasm. The students not included in the subset were given less opportunity for dialogue and were often instructed by Shelly at the beginning of the class regarding what the activity was and how it was to be completed.

Theory five, the teacher must work for improvement, was strongly grounded in both Shelly's life and professional experience. As her non-traditional student status supported, Shelly viewed life as a continual learning opportunity. She was extremely reflective and her reflection process was further supported by her pre-service experience with the reflective practitioner model encountered during her MA program. As Shelly summarized,



The understanding of what we do in our lives and in our classroom should be for teachers an ultimate desire. We have the chance to make meaning out of the daily reality and that drives me to see my teaching reality as close to my ideal as possible. Let's not confuse reality with the unwillingness to re-evaluate our classrooms and ourselves.

Of Shelly's six PPT's, theory five was the most represented in her practice. Shelly perceived her first year as a learning experience to be applied to subsequent years. She recognized her difficulty and, even when asked if she would like to withdrawal from this study, stressed that she needed the opportunity for reflection in order to improve. Shelly participated in both formal in-services (offered through a local university and her school district) and informal reflection processes in an effort to identify methods to assist her teaching. She sought others with similar teaching experiences to better understand what they have done in order to cope with what Shelly termed, "A situation for which I was not prepared." In one such relationship, Shelly explained a discussion she had with a peer as follows,

I said to her that I feel as if I don't teach these kids a thing. I'm not enriching their lives. Then she responds with, "Nonsense, you do teach these kids. Just not in the traditional sense of a classroom." I looked at her as if she had two heads. But then I realized she might be right. I don't always understand what is happening, but I'm getting these kids that stick to me like Velcro. I walk through the school and I get eighth graders I don't remember ever seeing in my life saying hello to me. Or kids that just come up and start a conversation. I don't know what the basis of the relationship is, unless I'm that mean old lady. But, I always am what I am. If I tell you to pull up your pants today, I will still tell you three days from now. They know where they stand with me, and what I will accept and what I won't accept. I'm not sure what I give them, but I do not think it's one thing. It just may be a whole bunch of little things that add up some way to them.

When asked if she planned on returning next year, Shelly commented, "I'd like to loop with these students. They have so much instability in their lives that it might help them. Knowing what I know now, well, it would certainly be an improvement." Shelly laughingly added, "The devil you know is better than the devil you don't know. But, it would be a good experiment for these kids and I have a whole lot invested here."

Shelly defined her final theory, which focused on life beyond the classroom, as a need for teachers to be involved with activities not directly related to the school setting. Shelly stressed that such activities actually promote better teaching because they help teachers process and reduce the stress that builds from day to day teaching. Shelly described her ceramics courses and the people she met through such events as “professional therapy that enables me to better approach my classroom and students.”

Even though finding time was difficult, Shelly was able to engage in personal activities outside of the classroom. As Shelly commented, “I’m making in-roads with this belief. I need to keep realizing that an outside life helps me in the classroom.” Shelly’s largest challenge to theory six was the amount of time spent on planning for instruction and grading papers. When faced with the decision to prioritize these two difficulties, Shelly generally spent her energy on planning. She often talked about searching for books and resources to use in her class that provided a better starting point for learning than what the text offered. Shelly viewed this time as important, but one that often infringed upon her outside life. However, as the year progressed, she began to connect how personal reading could be incorporated in her classroom planning when she said, “I realized that the two can coexist. I find myself now reading for pleasure while I use that knowledge in the classroom. There are ways to have both.”

Gary identified his PPT’s as follows:

- 1) Respect and dignity are key to a professional classroom environment;
- 2) The teacher must make expectations known;
- 3) Fairness builds trust;
- 4) Teacher is a facilitator;
- 5) Planning is key to a successful lesson.

Gary's statement regarding respect and dignity as key components of the classroom (theory one) was grounded in his own elementary school experiences. As a young child, Gary was often afraid of providing wrong answers and being ridiculed when asked to express himself during class. As a result Gary claimed, "I became the average student who sat in the back of the classroom and rarely uttered an opinion." Gary's early years in the navy further supported what he called his "keep your eyes open and your mouth shut" philosophy. This approach stayed with him until he became a commissioned officer and began to realize that people solicited his opinion as he began to build confidence regarding his thoughts and what he had to offer. Concerned with his early development, Gary said, "How would my life be different if I had developed this skill earlier? Better yet, as a teacher, how can I prevent this from happening in my classroom?" Gary then answered his own question by saying,

I will operate my classroom like a work place. Students are the employees and the teacher is the management. To maximize productivity (learning), the work place environment must assure that each member is treated respectfully. Furthermore, ideas shared by one student must be received with due courtesy and consideration from the other students. Demeaning comments and petty remarks often destroy and mutate creative expression.

When asked about his PPT's and his first year of teaching, Gary indicated theory one was critical when he stated,

Probably the biggest thing I think of is maintaining a level of dignity and respect in the classroom. Probably more so than anything else. It sticks out to me because I notice that some of the kids have a tendency to get out of control. Now, I'm not a control freak, but I want to have some level of dignity both for the students and for myself in the classroom.

Gary's classroom actions strongly supported the existence of theory one. His planning and classroom decision making often considered how to respectfully involve students in their learning while maintaining a minimum level of emotional security. Gary viewed this as a balance between maintaining a sense of order (imposed by the teacher) and having a free exchange of

dialogue (between all class members). This meant to Gary that he, at times, needed to intervene in the classroom flow in order to as he described,

... keep egos from getting bruised. At this age, I can sometimes see things getting out of control. If that happens, then we lose trust. I'm referring to how they interact with each other. I then need to create the sense of order that maintains the level of dignity so that kids don't become cruel or mean to each other. I need to support free expression in the classroom without the feeling of repercussions.

Supporting Gary's comments was an instance with a student who, as a result of having partially paralyzed facial muscles, had difficulty pronouncing words during a presentation. Gary clearly communicated to the class that all presentations deserve the full attention of all students. He further commented that, "We all have strengths and weaknesses when presenting and that supporting our peers is one way to help improve areas of weaknesses." When asked if he had considered not having this student present or not raising awareness of the issue to the class, Gary responded, "He is going to be in front of people his entire life. He has got to be a productive citizen."

Theory two, making expectations known, was defined by Gary as informing students early about course requirements through a syllabus and by continuing to reemphasize expectations as the course proceeds. Again, this belief was also grounded in Gary's own schooling as he valued how college syllabi helped him better understand instructors' intent. Gary wondered why course expectations were only made explicit to him during his post-secondary education and stressed, as a teacher, he would implement these in his own classroom.

Gary did indeed provide a course syllabus for students. The four-page document contained an introduction, an explanation of the five themes of geography, topics of study, class policies, and an explanation of the grading process and procedures. In addition to a yearly focus, Gary maintained a daily emphasis of expectations through his Plan of the Day (POD). POD,

which Gary first experienced in the Navy, was another descriptor for a daily agenda. As Gary emphasized, “At the beginning of class, everybody knows what we are going to do that period. That allows us to remain focused and provide a sense of timing for our efforts.”

However, Gary was often faced with the tension that developed between making expectations known (theory two) and being flexible (see theory four). Gary commented, “I don’t always come across as being a facilitator for the classroom. Sometimes I think I become more task oriented.” When that occurred, Gary often perceived that he had a negative impact on his students. He viewed them participating not because of intrinsic reasons, but because he had required something to be completed. This tension weighed heavily on Gary as he often considered ways to influence the level of respect and dignity, provide expectations, and still adhere to practices rooted in constructivist learning theory.

Theory three, fairness builds trust, was grounded in an experience Gary had as a junior high school student. Gary recalled,

I had a class in which the instructor’s use of praise for a few students effectively destroyed his rapport with the majority of the class. This was a tragedy that I do not wish to repeat as a teacher. I need to be careful not to let a personal bias enter into praise thereby alienating other segments of the class.

Gary explained that students must perceive the teacher as being fair in regards to classroom interaction and that fairness is actually the foundation for building trust between the students and teacher. As Gary noted, “Regardless of well meaning and good intentions, if the perception develops that the teacher is unfair, then there may be seriously negative consequences on the students.”

Gary’s efforts at building trust were in no way focused on developing friendships between himself and students. Instead, Gary referred back to the teacher as employer and student

as employee relationship as the medium for building trust. Gary stressed that the key in such relationships was to be perceived as being a fair and respectful manager. As Gary commented,

I refer to the students as “sir” and “ma’am.” I do this to consciously maintain the distance between manager and friend. I try to instill in them that this is a workplace. This is a formal place, not a casual place. This isn’t a place where I’m your friend. Instead, this is a place where you do some serious work.”

Despite his original thoughts, Gary often specifically praised students during activities.

When asked about this, Gary said, “I have certainly given more praise than I had ever anticipated. It’s mainly because of the fragileness of some of their egos and personalities. I may be a bit softer now, but I think it’s worthwhile.” Gary emphasized that his approval helps foster student performance and reinforces his role as a positive manager.

Gary was well grounded in pedagogy supporting constructivism and viewed the teacher as one who should facilitate the students’ efforts at exploring ways to understand and find meaning in the content under study (theory four). Gary explained this as a pragmatic process that uses multiple channels to bridge students, the teacher, and the subject. He commented,

There are numerous ways to employ the tenets of constructivism. As the teacher, I can take advantage of group debating that embraces the fundamental principles of democracy and citizenship education. I can also utilize the media as another forum that can be used as an integral part of civic education. I can even incorporate Internet technology as a communication tool, providing students with information that will help them make informed and responsible choices. It does require me to be creative and to understand the interests of the children.

Gary summarized his viewpoint by suggesting that the overall goal of the school (and his teaching) is for students to process various sources of information in an effort to improve the decisions made by citizens.

Gary’s syllabus explicitly stated that a variety of learning activities would be incorporated within the classroom and the field observations supported this assertion. However, not all were based on student initiative. As previously noted, Gary struggled on striking a

balance between providing structure and facilitating teaching. Gary often expressed how he wanted students to take what he offered, make connections to their own experiences, and then teach one another. Gary referred to this process when he said,

Relating what we do to the kids' lives does not come naturally. If you are going from a known something to an unknown something, how can you tie that into where students understand the point? I do try a variety of activities that build upon each other and give the kids a chance to share what they have learned. In a way, they each become expert at one element and can share that with others.

Yet, Gary also talked about the limits of putting this belief into practice. These limits were often centered on the amount of time students were on task. Gary commented, "I want to see kids on task. That's a barometer for the amount of activity to be completed and how hard they are working. They have their roles to complete and I have mine."

Gary's final PPT, stressing planning as the key to a successful lesson, was described during his preservice experience as the way to directly impact the direction of his classes. Gary viewed planning as a key element in all professions. Planning, as Gary stated, "Requires quality instruments that are routinely and uniformly administered and reviewed." Gary interpreted planning as being something that teachers need to do on a systematic basis (regularly and often) that utilizes both personal and professional resources. Gary also argued that planning must strike a balance between formality and flexibility. As he stated, "I learned that planning requires coordination. Accordingly, the teacher must be cognizant of Murphy's Law that says if something can go wrong, it will."

The field observations and artifacts collected do reinforce what Gary stated regarding the importance of planning. Gary maintained a weekly plan book that contained both long-range goals as well as revised daily and weekly planning notations. Gary described his planning as

being different from what one might expect to see by a first year teacher. He explained this by saying,

I first visualize things, such as what I want the end product to look like. Then I work backwards to see what will ultimately be my first steps. I don't want to start my planning with the first step and then draw diagrams or charts in an effort to brainstorm what will be the end product. Instead, I'll start with that end product first.

Gary elaborated that this approach provided more control for him regarding both the content and his instructional strategies. When asked if this limited students' efforts at creating curriculum and initiating learning, Gary said, "No, not always. Remember that I'm not giving the specifics of what and how to do it. I'm providing the structure to the end product. It's their task to develop the process."

Gary also expressed pleasure in not relying on the textbook as much as he originally thought he would as a first year teacher. Gary's in-class text usage was moderate the first nine weeks of school, but faded by the second semester to mostly being used as a resource for planning. When asked if that would continue, Gary said, "Yes, I'll always incorporate it somehow, but maybe less for specific content and more for learning how to access information."

Mary identified her PPT's as follows:

- 1) Teachers are professionals and should act accordingly;
- 2) There are no bad students;
- 3) Students will have a voice in their classroom;
- 4) The classroom will be visually stimulating;
- 5) I will use group work.

Mary viewed theory one, focused on teachers as professionals, as the manner in which teachers portray themselves to the public, their peers, and their students. Mary argued that teachers often limit professionalism by their in-school behaviors and actions. She commented,



They (teachers) have worked hard to earn a degree. Yet, they act like they're still in school themselves. I have seen teachers gossip about others as well as students instead of using such time for more valuable exchanges. I am going to work hard at breaking these habits and instead elevate myself to the professionalism of this career.

Mary provided examples of what she termed professionalism by the way that teachers model classroom behaviors (such as using correct grammar, being polite and using phrases such as thank you and please, by looking and dressing appropriately, and by avoiding any use of sarcasm). Mary added that social studies teachers, in a show of professionalism, must decide how to help students become better individuals. Mary viewed her role in this effort as one who would guide students through their examinations of history. As she described, "Professionally, I will try not to influence them too much. Instead, I want to show them both sides of the story."

Although her actions supported her first PPT, Mary's perception of the teacher as a professional expanded during her first year of teaching. Mary did demonstrate professional attributes within her dress, language, and mannerisms and her classroom actions also supported her role as an unbiased guide for students. Yet, Mary began to see that her planning for instruction was also related to professionalism. Mary commented,

I find myself going to scholarly resources when I'm planning. I'm going beyond just my book. Also, when something does not go well, I find myself thinking about it differently. I look back on myself to determine what I could have done to make that a better experience for the students. I guess I'm becoming a reflective practitioner. That's part of being the professional. I've noticed that I'm extremely critical of my actions and beginning to make sense out of what works and what doesn't. I'm already thinking about next year. That's been one of my biggest challenges, but I don't want to wait for five years until I have this down. I want to do that now.

Mary's second theory, stating that there are no bad students, stemmed from her convictions that students are often the victims of preconceived judgements by teachers as a result of previous grades, records, and even other teachers. Mary stressed that every student entering a class should start with a fair, unbiased chance for success. In order for this to occur, Mary stated

that, “Teachers need to learn about the background of students in an effort to help them, not prejudge them.” This belief was grounded in Mary’s own school experiences as she often wondered why her teachers frequently compared her to her siblings even though she was, in her words, “remarkably different from them.”

During her first year, Mary demonstrated practices supporting her explanation of theory two. The school culture was largely student focused and, thus, the opportunity for negative discussions was often mitigated. However, when Mary did encounter such exchanges, she often failed to enter the conversation or respond to the comments. As she stated, “If a teacher has a situation with a student, then that needs to remain between the teacher and the student.”

Mary had developed strong relationships with the majority of her students and there was a clear appreciation on the students’ behalf of Mary’s personality. Supporting theory two, Mary was well aware of her students and had, by mid-year, much knowledge of students’ personal and family backgrounds. Mary’s understanding of her students was often the catalyst for conversations before, during, and after class as she frequently connected students’ lives with the class content. Mary’s relationships with her students lent a more casual atmosphere to her class and caused her to strike a balance between being a friend and a teacher. The level of interaction and in-class dialogue often wandered from the instructional focus and Mary was forced to redirect the attention of her students. Although frustrating for Mary, she did see this as a valuable element of her teaching. When asked if she viewed this as negative student behavior, Mary commented, “No, they are good kids. They do drive me nuts on some days. But that’s the mix of the students and the way that I allow them to become part of the class.” Mary added, “Well, as a group, you might say they are bad (laughs). But as individuals, no, not at all. They are reacting to how I approach the class and this is just there way of participating.”

Related to student participation was Mary's third theory, that students should have a strong voice in their classroom. To describe this theory, Mary referred to a scene from the 1982 film Fast Times at Ridgemont High. In the scene, a history teacher criticized one of the students, Jeff Spicoli, for interrupting what the teacher described as, "my time." Spicoli responded by saying, "I'm here and you're here, so isn't this our time?" Mary explained that this scene impacted how she perceived her classroom as a cooperative setting in which teachers and students shared responsibility for decision-making. She commented, "I need to be a wise teacher and give students some autonomy in the classroom." She added, "I like to think of myself as the president and the students as the congress as we share in our duties within the classroom."

Of Mary's PPT's, theory three was according to Mary the least represented within her teaching. Mary said that giving students input was more difficult than she imagined. She described her actions as a balance between, in her words, "Providing for my voice and their voice at the same time." However, the data indicate that Mary did provide much opportunity for students to impact the direction of their learning. Mary consistently used collaborative teaching methods that supported a broad range of student learning. Mary's teaching incorporated issues-centered and inquiry-based instructional approaches. The transmission of factual knowledge was limited as Mary developed a number of projects stressing skill-based activities that allowed students to research, analyze, critique, and evaluate. Furthermore, Mary's use of classroom discussions was quite flexible and allowed students to engage in a variety of topics related to the content. When asked about her class as being student centered and student guided, Mary responded, "Students do have the freedom to arrive at learning in many different ways. I do see my classes as being tangential. I have the idea of what I want them to get, but getting there can be, sometimes, bizarre."

Theory four, the classroom will be visually stimulating, stemmed from Mary's own need to be in a visually stimulated environment. She remembered many classrooms that contained four sparsely decorated walls and an uninspiring bulletin board. Mary argued that teachers should bombard students with visual images about the content being studied. She perceived this as a chance to immerse students within their studies and at the same time spark their interests. To support these efforts during her preservice studies, Mary often obtained free maps and posters from the local library and searched for content-related images at bargain shops and garage sales. Mary originally stated, "My classroom will be full of eye candy that is constantly changing as the subject matter progresses throughout the year."

Knowing that she would switch between two classrooms throughout the day, there was initial concern from Mary about her ability to implement practices that represented theory four. However, according to Mary, switching classes did not cause the kinds of problems she had anticipated. Instead of relying on wall and bulletin board designs as she had initially described, Mary developed and incorporated strategies that used visual stimulation within the learning activities. Mary consistently used photographs, primary source documents, maps, and art images as ways to connect students with the content under study. In one example, Mary, wanting to reinforce Confederate symbolism, had students link photographs of southern military and political leaders, confederate flags, maps of the South, and historical paintings related to the era. Mary described her need to include visual stimuli within instruction by stating, "I'm competing with a visual society. Even using simple things like concept maps, organization charts, flow charts, and Venn diagrams help kids see what they may be missing."

Mary's final theory, based on using group work, would be in her terms, "the most difficult to implement." Mary described herself as an independent person and had many

unsettling experiences during her own K-12 schooling regarding cooperative learning. As she said, “I have been burnt too many times in group work. I did the work and everybody shared the grade.” However, Mary understood the literature supporting collaborative learning and, even though she had negative experiences with such processes, she saw the importance to include it within her own instructional actions. As she stated, “I know students are social and know that learning can be enhanced through peer relationships. Because of that, I need to do what’s right for my students and overcome my own difficulty with using group strategies.”

Mary’s efforts at involving students through collaborative approaches were well documented. Even though Mary’s personal experiences did not favor the use of cooperative strategies, she supported their use professionally. Mary commented, “The kids like it and if they like it, and they are learning, that’s fine.” Her efforts to support collaborative learning ranged from allowing group-based discussion responses to full group projects incorporating literature and dramatic presentations. Interestingly, Mary’s use of cooperative learning was heaviest during the second and third semesters of the year. When asked about this, Mary responded,

I was quite afraid to implement these strategies at first. I was getting my feet wet. When I realized that the kids enjoyed them and it really was not that bad on me, well, I ran with them. But, towards the end of the year, I began to run out of time. I still had in my mind lots to cover and only a few weeks to cover it. So I backed off of the cooperative projects. I know it was cramming at the end, but the time constraints were becoming important.

### Evolution of PPT’s During the First Year of Teaching

Shelly faced the most difficulty of the three teachers at implementing practice grounded in her originally stated PPT’s. Of her six beliefs, only theories five (work for improvement) and six (life beyond the classroom) were frequently observed guiding her actions. Shelly’s teaching did represent, to a limited degree, the classroom as a positive environment (theory one), the teacher as a role model for conduct and enthusiasm (theory two), all students can learn (theory

three), and the teacher presenting well-prepared lessons (theory four). However, these four theories were only regularly represented when Shelly instructed to the subset of each of her classes. Students not included within the subset were instead instructed on improving classroom behaviors as opposed to being involved in learning course content (a change from her originally stated PPT's). It should be noted, however, that students could over time move into the instructional subset. During the course of the semester, relationships were reinforced between Shelly and select students outside of the subset. When this occurred, efforts were made by Shelly to include them within the teaching group and these students remained within the subset for the rest of the year.

Why Shelly deviated from her original PPT's may be complex. When asked why she did not regularly implement practice representing her PPT's, Shelly replied, "They (students) just don't have the capacity to do it. We have kids that can't learn in a regular classroom environment." There were school-wide concerns with a number of teaching and learning issues and Shelly was not alone in her struggles. Issues often discussed among the faculty (and Shelly) were discipline concerns, student preparedness, motivation, and lack of parent support. The setting for Shelly's first year of teaching was different than what she received from her university-based internship and student teaching experiences. When asked about her preparation, Shelly insisted that she was actually better prepared than most because of her life experiences. Yet, she followed that statement by saying, "Well, there was a socioeconomic level I had never dealt with. It was like, hello, welcome to the real world."

Shelly's first year was far more challenging than she expected. To her credit, she persisted and relied on her fifth PPT (improvement) in a variety of ways to help her cope. She began reading literature related to urban school settings and, even when going to the bookstore

for personal readings (supporting theory six), Shelly would often end up in the educational section of the store. Here, she began to better understand, in her words, “How people start in this section of society (that of her school) but succeed at life.” Shelly’s efforts are a work in progress in what many would call a deeply problematic setting. Her thoughts of looping to the next grade level with her students is a reflection of her commitment to her teaching obligation, and given time, the benefits may be observable.

Overall, Gary’s first year of teaching reflected his PPT’s. Stemming from his career as a naval officer, Gary demonstrated practice that was, in his words, a “tight ship.” However, embedded within the employer/employee relationship was a high level of empathy from Gary for his students. This was unexpected for Gary as he initially began the year with the belief that student efforts should only be rewarded if properly deserved. In his explanation of how theory three (fairness builds trust) would be put into practice, Gary said he would avoid in his words, “damning with faint praise.” This belief was well grounded in his naval experiences and he was quite adamant that fairness was built through the trust provided by proper rewards. Yet, as Gary progressed through his first year, he realized that students sometimes needed additional emotional support and that he would need to be the provider of such support.

Regarding theory one, Gary was able to instill a high degree of respect and dignity within the classroom. These character attributes seemed to exist because of the type of structure Gary provided as students demonstrated respect and dignity as a result of external influences. Meaning students reacted with respect because Gary expected them to do so, not because of intrinsic reasons. It should be noted that Gary was not initially concerned with how respect and dignity were manifested in his classroom. Instead, he was aware of their importance and at making

efforts to ensure that these behaviors would be demonstrated, even if that meant he was to influence them externally.

Theory two, which focused on making expectations known, was thoroughly manifested within Gary's practice. However, Gary did struggle between making expectations known and acting as a facilitator of student learning. His first year experiences demonstrated what Pape suggested regarding how teachers make sense of new experiences in light of existing knowledge. How Gary planned for his naval experiences differed from those within his social studies classroom. Gary realized that his teaching actions were frequently changing, sometimes even during instruction, and that these changes impacted how he made expectations known. Yet, these same instructional changes supported theory four by facilitating instruction. Gary worked through this struggle by reexamining what he meant by expectations and began to see expectations as a means to guide learning as opposed to mandate learning.

Gary's theory five, which related to planning, was also connected to the tension between theories two and four. Gary's naval experiences reinforced in him the need to be well organized and task minded. However, Gary also stressed that planning should include the need for flexibility and contingency. The ability to accept change was often demonstrated by Gary. In fact, Gary's planning frequently stressed two elements: long term objectives (supporting theory two) and short term adjustments (supporting theory four). By taking this approach, Gary was able to implement practice that was grounded in existing beliefs but also allow new experiences to shape current thinking about teaching and learning.

Like Gary, Mary demonstrated practice that well supported her PPT's and refined how she viewed her PPT's as a result of her first year of teaching. Regarding theory one, which focused on professionalism, Mary expanded her definition of what professionalism embodies.



Originally, Mary viewed professionalism as being limited to how a teacher models specific behaviors such as manners and language use. As the year progressed, this PPT evolved so that it represented the teacher as having instructional responsibilities for the students. Mary began to see a connection between planning and professionalism. She also realized that the promotion of citizenship could be viewed under the parameters of professionalism within its evolving definition.

Mary's perception of PPT's two, three, and four also changed as a result of practice. Theory two, there are no bad students, was originally translated by Mary as a need to develop relationships with students. However, it was through this relationship building that Mary began to better understand how her students learned as she made explicit connections between course content and students' lives. According to Mary, this was something that was often lacking in her own K-12 experiences. As a result, she consistently made efforts at being an approachable teacher for the students in an effort to have them view the classroom as a community.

Regarding theory three (students having a voice), Mary had originally felt that implementing practices based on this PPT were difficult to achieve. Yet, the findings indicate that Mary did indeed make efforts to create a classroom climate supporting student involvement and self-direction. In support of theory one's evolution, Mary even indicated that allowing for student input was now a professional responsibility. Her initial lack of confidence regarding student involvement may be related to her fifth PPT (using group work). Mary described herself as an independent learner and offered group activities solely because of her professional understanding. She realized that much research supported collaborative instructional strategies. When asked about the value of such strategies, Mary would usually interject first with an explanation of why she did not like these approaches in her K-12 experiences and then explain

the benefits of these strategies as identified in the literature. When suggested that she actually used a high number of collaborative strategies, Mary responded by saying, “I guess I don’t see that. If that’s the case, I’m doing it for the students, not me.” Her professional obligations (theories one) regarding cooperative learning (theory five) may have had a strong influence on her planning and instruction.

Mary also reconsidered the meaning of theory four (having a visually stimulating classroom). Because she used multiple classrooms, Mary was unable to demonstrate practices supporting this belief as she originally intended. Yet, she was aware of the importance of using visual imagery to enhance student learning. As a result, Mary began to emphasize and incorporate visually enhanced strategies as part of her instruction. This approach was a compromise between what she originally intended and what was practical in her efforts to use strategies based on her beliefs.

### Conclusion and Implications

While this research attempted to portray how personal theorizing impacted practice and evolved as a result of experience, it nevertheless remains an interpretation based upon the relationship between the researcher and the respective participants. The researcher attempted to accurately portray how the participants perceived practice as viewed through their PPT’s as well as through the lens and experiences of the researcher. Due to the design, the research is limited by the perceptive capabilities of the human instrument and is not generalizable in rationalistic terms. Therefore, readers of this paper are encouraged to recognize the similarity, but not the identity, between one situation and the next in order to make appropriate inferences (Eisner, 1998, p. 198).

Cornett (1990b) suggested that teacher thinking research within the social studies may be better served by having preservice students examine their personal theorizing as it related to their instructional decisions and subsequent classroom actions. Cornett's model served as the basis for the process undertaken by Shelly, Gary, and Mary. They brought into their first year of teaching a systematic understanding of their teaching beliefs (in both explanation and justification). The results of this study indicate that all three teachers attempted to utilize their PPT's as a guiding framework for instructional decisions. The teachers were very much aware of their PPT's as they began their first year of instruction. Although explicit, this awareness was not made available in the form of actually posting beliefs in the classroom or on lesson plan books to be used as a reference. Instead, each teacher easily recalled his or her PPT's and rationalized why they were important within their teaching. The PPT's were also implicitly evident for Gary and Mary as these two teachers made instructional decisions and took classroom actions grounded in what they expressed as their respective PPT's. Both Gary and Mary would often assert that they were unaware of making such decisions but, in hindsight, said that these decisions were correct because they paralleled their instructional beliefs.

The findings indicate that actually using PPT's to guide practice was less evident for Shelly than it was for Gary and Mary. Gary and Mary made curricular and instructional decisions that frequently corresponded with their explanations of their PPT's. It should be noted that Gary and Mary's first year teaching assignments were similar to the settings in which they completed their preservice on-site experiences. This was not the case for Shelly as she often mentioned the differences between her preservice and first year experiences. Shelly expressed that it was frustrating and difficult to create an instructional setting grounded in what she believed to be good practice (as defined by her PPT's).

In addition, Gary and Mary refined their PPT's as a result of experience. Such evolution of beliefs was evident in how Gary's perception of praise changed due to what he now identified as the fragile nature of his students' egos. This change of thinking was quite different from Gary's naval experiences and demonstrated a way for Gary to hold on to a well-grounded belief in light of new experience. Mary's explanation of her belief regarding professionalism evolved from modeling behaviors to modeling professional commitment (such as using scholarly resources and planning collaborative projects). The findings do support the assumption that Gary and Mary's PPT's influenced practice. However, it was also evident that their practices had positive influence on their PPT's. This interplay between beliefs and practice supports McCutcheon's (1992, p. 196) statement that refinement of theories of action (beliefs) is a result of acting and reflecting on experience. This may also be true in Shelly's case, although different from Gary and Mary in that it was more difficult for Shelly to refine her PPT's because her originally stated beliefs were not manifested in her overall practice. Shelly was more concerned with her general instructional perseverance and only demonstrated practices supporting her PPT's within the class subset she established. In essence, Shelly struggled between implementing practice based on her PPT's and developing new beliefs aimed at classroom management needs. In Shelly's case, it was evident that her instructional experience had more influence on her teacher beliefs than her teaching beliefs had on her practice.

In summary, the three teachers of this study did attempt to utilize a personal guiding theory that represented each individual's explanation and justification of experiences. Furthermore, for two of the three teachers (Gary and Mary), the personal theorizing developed as preservice teachers had a positive influence on their first year of teaching. The practice of these two teachers was shaped, in part, by their PPT's. Finally, all three individuals experienced

further development and refinement of their beliefs as a result of experience. For two of the three (Gary and Mary), the refinement occurred within their originally stated PPT's. For Shelly, the refinement of existing PPT's was less applicable due to the difficulties she faced at developing practices supporting these beliefs.

Further investigations regarding how personal theorizing impacts practice are necessary. Such examinations have the potential to help teacher educators support the efforts of beginning teachers through reflection and critical inquiry. As found in this study, it appears beneficial for students to thoroughly explain (define), justify (ground in both practical and personal experience), and analyze (collect data within practice) their personal theorizing as preservice teachers. However, not included for the participants of this study was a substantial comparison of beliefs in relation to quality social studies practices within diverse, exceptional settings. These types of comparisons may better assist teachers practicing in settings different from those encountered during their preservice studies and ensure a more successful teaching and learning experience for all involved.

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