

**Social Studies Instructional Practices among Alternatively Certified Elementary Teachers: The New York City Teaching Fellows**

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### **Introduction**

The discussion of best instructional practice for teachers across all subject areas has emphasized student centered learning. In the early twentieth century, John Dewey advocated classroom instruction based on students' prior understandings and knowledge (Dewey, 1969). It is in this early work of progressive educators such as Dewey that the beginning of constructivist pedagogy lies. This pedagogy is typically emphasized in today's teacher education courses (Howe & Berv, 2000). In the specific area of social studies education, constructivist teaching practices center on students' building their sense of the past through a variety of experiences with historical inquiry, including among others their own family histories, their ethnic identities, television and textbooks (Levstik & Barton, 2001; Wineberg, 1996; VanSledright, 2002).

This study investigates the social studies teaching practices of sixty-seven elementary teachers who are part of the New York City Teaching Fellows Program and are newly certified in an alternative master's degree program at a large public college in New York City. The respondents are graduating from a program that emphasizes constructivist and inquiry based teaching practices in its methods courses in social studies, as well as its courses in other disciplines. The respondents were asked to complete an exit survey at the end of their master's degree program.

The first part of this study is based on questions from the survey concerning different types of classroom instructional practices in social studies. The purpose of the questions is to determine to what extent, if any, new teachers practice constructivist pedagogy. The questions focus primarily on the contrast between teacher centered learning and student constructed learning. The responses to these questions determine the type of instruction

the alternatively certified teachers use in social studies and the extent that they use either teacher centered or student constructed learning.

Secondly, the study evaluates the social studies teaching practices of twenty of the sixty-seven respondents who have undergraduate majors in the social sciences. The purpose is to determine if constructivist teaching practices in social studies occur more frequently in a group with specific subject matter preparation in the disciplines of social studies than in the general group of respondents.

Thirdly, the study is based on case studies of six respondents from the group of twenty social science majors who majored in one of the disciplines contained in the social studies learning standards both nationally and in New York state (New York State Education Department, 2005). These disciplines include history, geography, economics and political science. This group is evaluated based on questions from the exit survey that include not only their teaching methods but also their source and support in the areas of content knowledge, professional knowledge, lesson organization and classroom management. The purpose of the case studies is to determine what the respondents view as the source of their teaching knowledge. The possible choices are coursework or practical school and classroom experiences.

### **Constructivist Pedagogy**

In general, constructivist teaching practices focus on the creation of student understandings based on an interaction between what the student already knows and believes and ideas and knowledge with which they come into contact (Resnick, 1989; Richardson, 1999; 2003)). In this approach to learning, knowledge is seen as created rather than received, understood through student discussion rather than direct instruction by the teacher and explored and developed rather than memorized and recalled (Holt-Reynolds, 2000).

Nor do we believe that most of our knowledge is acquired, ready formed, by some sort of direct perception or absorption. Undoubtedly humans are born with some cognitive or epistemological equipment of potentialities . . . , but by and large human knowledge, and the criteria and methods we use in our inquiries, are all constructed (Phillips, 1995, p.5).

In contrast to constructivist pedagogy, is a transmission method of teaching, which John Dewey (1960) called the “spectator theory of knowledge”. In this theory of knowledge acquisition the learner is a spectator and remains passive in receiving and acquiring knowledge. The learner does not interact with the information that is acquired. This transmission method of teaching and learning that is centered on direct instruction by the teacher is frequently used in classrooms with limited success:

Many view teaching as the relatively effective transmission of important information. However, there is considerable evidence that a reception-accrual model of learning . . . is unlikely to result in significant understandings (Howey & Zimpher, 1999, p.281)

Howey and Zimpher (1999) go on to say:

Far too many view teaching as the maintenance of order and the transmission of information efficiently and effectively (p. 280)

In contrast to teacher directed instructional methodology or the spectator theory of knowledge acquisition, researchers have defined constructivist teaching practices as containing the following elements, which include some direct instruction when necessary to support constructivist pedagogy (Richardson, 2003):

1. Focus on the individual student’s background, understandings and beliefs in a particular subject area
2. Encouragement of group discussions based on a subject matter topic that helps in creating and sharing understanding of the topic
3. Presentation of knowledge in a subject area using direct instruction, text references, a web site and other information sources as necessary
4. Structured tasks that assist a student in understanding, questioning and changing existing beliefs and knowledge
5. Increasing students understanding of what they know and how they learn

In social studies, constructivist pedagogy most often takes the form of historical inquiry. Students construct their sense of the past utilizing a variety of historical experiences which include their own experiences and more traditional print, audio and video media (Levstik & Barton, 2001; Wineberg, 1996; VanSledright, 1996, VanSledright, 2002). Children use their own life experiences to establish understandings of historical data and how those data relate to them personally. In a traditional transmission style classroom, students view history as facts to be memorized and do not understand that their own judgments about history are important (VanSledright, 1996; Wineberg, 1996). In contrast, when students “do” history, they ask questions, collect and analyze sources and build their own interpretations of historical events (Levstik & Barton, 2001; VanSledright, 2002).

The instructional approach necessary for this type of student learning is dependent in some degree on a teacher’s subject matter knowledge. The manner in which a teacher teaches history is grounded therefore in his or her understanding of the subject itself combined with his or her understanding of how students understand the subject (Sosniak, 1999; Wineberg & Wilson, 1991). Elementary teachers often do not major in one of the disciplines of social studies, such as history or political science, and may be unfamiliar with historical ways of thinking (Wilson & Wineberg, 1988). Additionally they may not have the pedagogical preparation to teach historical inquiry in which students are encouraged to structure questions and interpret different sources of information (McDiamid, 1990). Their understanding of constructivist pedagogy may not extend to an understanding of how historians investigate and construct knowledge through the use of multiple sources. Additionally, they may be in a school environment that encourages coverage for test preparation and teacher centered instruction as demonstrated by the proliferation of scripted lessons (Fehn & Koeppen, 1998; VanSledright, 1996). This type

of school environment encourages the transmission method of acquiring knowledge which is less time consuming than the construction of knowledge by students.

### **New York City Teaching Fellows Program**

Increasing student enrollments and teacher retirements are creating teacher shortages across the country (Gerald & Hussar, 1998). The shortage particularly in urban schools has produced a demand for certified teachers especially in low performing, high need schools. To meet this need states have created alternate paths to teacher certification:

One of the major aims of AC [alternative certification] is to appeal to talented individuals from all walks of life who wouldn't ordinarily consider teaching. In this way, it hopes to help bring in a cohort of new teachers who are committed to teaching in hard-to-staff subjects and areas, who reflect the growing diversity of student populations... (Wright, 2000,p.24).

A recent report found that as of 2005, 122 alternate routes to teacher certification exist in 47 states and the District of Columbia (National Center for Education Information, 2005). These programs represent many different types of alternative certification but all have the goal of fast tracking teachers into the classroom, with various degrees of prior preparation.

"The New York City Department of Education is the largest public school system in the country with 1.1 million children in 1,200 public schools" (New York City Department of Education, 2003). New York City's path to alternative certification which addresses the teacher shortage in their schools is called the Teaching Fellows Program. Similar to programs elsewhere, the purpose of the Teaching Fellows Program is to attract individuals interested in a career change into teaching in the New York City public schools. Many teaching fellows are placed in schools that "have not met the state's benchmarks for achievement, and are targeted for direct, immediate intervention and improvement in order to boost student performance" (NYC Department of Education,

2003). New York City provides the financial support for teaching fellows to obtain their masters degree so they can become certified.

New York City follows a model that is typical of alternative certification programs in other cities and states. The program involves a concentrated summer experience prior to placement in a teaching situation, a commitment to teach for a minimum of two years, a financial incentive such as a “sign-on bonus” or a free masters program, as well as matriculation into a shortened university-based teacher preparation program (Blair, 2003; Costigan, 2004; 2005; Lucadamo, 2002).

The New York City Teaching Fellows are placed in low performing schools and given financial support for a master’s degree program. The graduate program for elementary teachers in this study requires thirty-nine credits with the expectation of completion in two summer sessions and four consecutive sessions, two in the fall and two in the spring semesters.

Some of the teaching fellows take longer to complete the certification and masters’ degree requirements. New York state requires a broad liberal arts foundation, either in undergraduate or graduate work, for individuals who seek certification to teach in the elementary schools. This foundation includes courses in English, the social sciences, the physical and natural sciences, math, art and music. For teaching fellows that have insufficient course work in any of these areas, the courses must be completed before certification and a master’s degree are awarded.

Prior to placement in a classroom, teaching fellows must pass the required New York state teaching exams, complete six credits in elementary education and student teach during summer school. After successful completion of these requirements, teaching fellows are placed in their own elementary school classroom as full-time salaried

New York City teachers. They are required to continue working toward the Master of Arts in Teaching degree in order to obtain professional teaching certification in New York state.

The route to certification taken by the teaching fellows is an alternate program to the established Masters of Arts in Teaching program currently in place for second-career graduate students seeking a master's degree and teacher certification in the public college where the fellows are matriculated. Some of the teachers who do not have the required undergraduate major in the liberal arts or the required distribution of liberal arts undergraduate credits must take additional courses. The requirement of a broad liberal arts background is to insure a substantive content base for the major curriculum areas taught by each teacher in the elementary schools. (see: Malow-Iroff, O'Connor & Bisland, 2004; O'Connor, Malow-Iroff & Bisland, 2005).

The sixty-seven respondents in this study are part of this alternative certification program in elementary education. Two months prior to graduation, teaching fellows were asked to complete a survey to gauge their overall experiences in the classroom and in their college courses. The first teaching fellows cohort's data was collected by mailing the survey to them and asking them to mail it in the postage paid envelope during the spring 2003 semester. The second cohort of teaching fellows was given the surveys in their thesis class during the spring 2004 semester. The aggregated data from the two cohorts of teaching fellows resulted in 67 returned surveys, a 57 percent response rate.

### **Methodology**

The first group of questions from the exit survey that are used in this study are under the heading Domain Specific Instruction. Respondents were asked the following questions:

1. What percentage of the time and in which subjects do you use direct instruction (i.e., you the teacher direct all classroom activities)?



2. What percentage of the time and in which subjects do you use scripted lessons?
3. What percentage of the time and in which subject areas do you base your classroom instruction on your student's own experiences either inside or outside of school?
4. What percentage of the time and in which subject areas do you allow the students to come up with their own questions and base your classroom instruction on these student questions?

The choices under percentage of class time are 0-20%, 30-40% 50-60% 70-80% and 90-100%. The subject matter choices are the major curriculum areas in elementary schools; language arts, math, science and social studies.

The last two questions are designed to determine if the respondents base instruction on the students' life experiences and interests. The first question which concerns direct instruction does not exclude constructivist pedagogy, however. Direct instruction, which includes lectures and non-interactive media such as television, can help students build meaning (Richardson, 2003). It seems likely, however, that if teachers spend a high percentage of their time with direct instruction they are probably using a transmission model of instruction in which the teacher decides and delivers content and the student absorbs the information. Scripted lessons, as well, may provide opportunities for the teacher to determine student's knowledge and interests and do not necessarily exclude constructivist pedagogy. At this time, however, the programs being used in the respondents' schools do not appear to follow this model. The expectation is often that a teacher will be at a specific place in the script at a specific time of day. This requirement indicates that there is little time for interaction with students in order to aid them in constructing knowledge outside of very specific time limitations. One respondent commented that even though he was interested in using constructivist methodology based on inquiry in social studies, his school's use of scripted lessons made it almost impossible to secure the time for constructivist pedagogy.

The second group of questions from the exit survey concerns the source and support for different types of knowledge and instructional practice. The answers to these questions were evaluated for the six teaching fellows that have an undergraduate major in one of the disciplines covered by the national and New York state learning standards in social studies. Nine items on the survey rated the amount of support and information teaching fellows received from four sources; their college courses, the New York City consultants who observed them in their schools, school mentors who are assigned to observe and assist them in the school and other classroom teachers in their schools who had no supervisory responsibilities. The respondents were asked to rate these sources of support and information in four areas: classroom management, lesson organization, content knowledge, and professional knowledge. The final question asked them to rate how valuable each of the educational/support systems were for them. They rated each on a scale from 1-5 with 1 being the lowest rating and 5 being the highest rating.

Three open-ended questions asked how this experience could be improved. Teaching fellows were asked to give some suggestions to help improve the college coursework, working with the consultant and working with the school mentor.

### **Findings**

Use of Direct Instruction: Of sixty-three respondents (see Table I), nineteen use direct instruction over half of their instructional time (50-60%) and eleven (58%) use direct instruction in all four of the major elementary curriculum areas, which includes social studies as well as language arts, math and science. For thirty seven of the respondents who use direct instruction for 30 to 40% of their instructional time, twenty-four (65%) use direct instruction in all four of the major curriculum areas. One respondent used direct instruction only in social studies and that was for 30-40% of instructional time

Use of Scripted Lessons: Of fifty-five respondents (see Table II) only one uses scripted lessons only in social studies and that was from 0-20 % of instructional time. Fourteen respondents (20%) use scripted lessons in all four major curriculum areas. Ten (15%) use scripted lessons only in math. Seven (10%) use scripted lessons in both language arts and math and six (9%) use scripted lessons only in language arts. Of the fourteen respondents (20%) who use scripted lessons in all four curriculum areas, seven (50%) use the lessons over half of their instructional time and seven (50%) use the lessons less than half of their instructional time.

Class Instruction Based on Student Experiences: None of the sixty-three respondents to this question (see Table III) reported that they used instruction based on student experiences only in social studies. Ten (15%), never base their instruction in social studies on student experiences. Two (3%) use this type of instruction in social studies as well as language arts. Sixteen (26%) use student experience in social studies as well as language arts and math and thirty-four (56%) use student experiences in social studies as well as language arts, math and science. Sixteen of the respondents (24%) use this type of instruction in all subject areas except science. Of the thirty-four (56%) respondents who use instruction based on student experience in all major subject areas, twenty-nine (85%) report that they use this type of instruction between half and one hundred percent of their instructional time. Of the sixteen respondents (26%) who use instruction based on student experience in all major subject areas except science, thirteen (81%) use this type of instruction from half to one hundred percent of the time.

Class Instruction Based on Student Questions: None of the sixty-one respondents to this question (see Table IV) reported that they use this type of instruction only in social studies. Eighteen respondents (27%) never use instruction based on student questions in social studies, although they did use instruction based on student questions in other

curriculum areas. Twenty-seven respondents (40%) use instruction based on student questions in all of the major curriculum areas. Seven (10%) use this type of instruction in all subject areas except math. Of the twenty seven respondents (40%) who said they used instruction based on student questions in all of the major subject areas, seventeen (63%) reported using this type of instruction from one half to one hundred percent of their instructional time. In contrast, of the seven respondents who reported using this type of instruction in all major instructional areas except math, six (86%) use this type of instruction less than forty percent of their time.

Subject Preparation and Instructional Methods: Twenty of the respondents (28%) have undergraduate majors in a social science discipline. Six respondents majored in psychology and the same number majored in sociology (9% each), three majored in history (4%), two (3%) in political science and one majored in East Asian studies, one in economics, and one in urban studies (1.5% each). These particular respondents have been selected because of the theory that an individual with subject matter background and no pedagogical preparation can be placed in a classroom and will teach effectively (Kanstoroom & Finn, 1999; Paige, 2002; Walsh, 2001). These social science majors contain much of the subject matter included in the social studies curriculum.

Two of the sociology majors (see Table V) used direct instruction in social studies twenty percent or less of their instructional time. Seven of the social science majors used direct instruction in social studies between thirty and forty percent of their time. Five used direct instruction in social studies for one half to sixty percent of the time and none of the social science majors used direct instruction in social studies for seventy to one hundred percent of the time. Almost three fourths of the social science majors used direct instruction at least some of their instructional time. One fourth reported that they did not use direct instruction.

One political science and one psychology major (see Table VI) used scripted lessons in social studies twenty percent or less of their time. Two other political science and psychology majors used scripted lessons for social studies between thirty and forty percent of their time. Two more psychology majors used scripted lessons in social studies between seventy and eighty percent of their time and two sociology majors used scripted lessons over ninety percent of their time. Over half of the social science majors did not use scripted lesson in social studies.

Only one psychology major and one sociology major (see Table VII) did not use social studies instruction based on student experience. The remaining social science majors did use instruction based on student experience but the amount of time this instruction was used ranged from 30% to 80% of instructional time.

Two of the psychology majors and two of the sociology majors (see Table VIII) did not use instruction based on student questions in social studies. In contrast, the other social science majors used this type of instruction in social studies. The amount of time the instruction was used varied from 0-20% to 90-100% of instructional time.

#### Individual Case Studies of History, Political Science and Economics Undergraduate

##### Majors:

Social studies learning standards both nationally and at the state level focus on four social science disciplines; history, geography, economics and political science. (New York State Education Department, 2005). Given the argument that subject matter background and knowledge make teachers more comfortable in the use of constructivist pedagogies in their subject matter areas, the teaching practices of the three respondents who majored in history as undergraduates, the two respondents who majored in political science and the one respondent who majored in economics were specifically considered. No respondent majored in geography.

Nine items on the survey (see Table IX) rated the amount of support and information teaching fellows received from four sources; their college courses, the New York City consultants who observed them in their schools, school mentors who are assigned to observe and assist them in the school and other classroom teachers in their schools who had no supervisory responsibilities. The respondents were asked to rate these sources of support and information in four areas: classroom management, lesson organization, content knowledge, and professional knowledge. The final question asked them to rate how valuable each of the educational/support systems were for them. They rated each on a scale from 1-5 with 1 being the lowest rating and 5 being the highest rating.

Three open-ended questions asked how this experience could be improved. Teaching fellows were asked to give some suggestions to help improve the college coursework, working with the consultant and working with the school mentor.

One undergraduate history major was a museum educator for five or six years prior to becoming a teaching fellow. On the five point scale from very low to very high s/he gave a moderate rating to graduate courses in the areas of classroom management techniques, lesson planning, content knowledge and professional knowledge. Moderate was the highest rating given by this individual for any of the sources of content and pedagogical knowledge which included graduate coursework, consultants, other teachers in the school and teaching mentors. This individual gave particularly low ratings to the in school mentors and commented that they were annoying. S/he also wanted more practical applications in college courses. The only area in which s/he gave the graduate coursework a low rating was in the area of content knowledge acquired, although the other sources were given low or lowest level, as well, for acquisition of content knowledge.

The second history major was teaching in a fifth grade class and had no prior professional experience coming into the teaching fellows program after graduation from college. This individual rated all sources, including graduate classes very low in the acquisition of both pedagogical and content knowledge. There was no comment as to why all sources including graduate courses, consultants, other teachers and assigned mentors were very low in all areas. Two of this individual's comments may be enlightening. When asked if s/he planned to stay in the New York City schools, the response was that s/he wished to teach in a smaller district. When asked what motivated him/her to apply to the Teaching Fellows Program the response was "it sounded good".

The last history major had spent twenty years in advertising and was looking for a career change when s/he applied to the Teaching Fellows Program. S/he was placed in a fifth grade the first year of the program and a third grade the second year. In the area of classroom management techniques s/he rated her graduate classes very low, but gave a high rating to the in-school mentor as a source of knowledge in this area. All sources including graduate classes were rated low in teaching lesson plan organization. For content knowledge s/he gave graduate classes a low rating but the other sources were given a very low rating, as well. For acquiring professional knowledge s/he gave all sources a low rating. When asked how the graduate school experience could be improved the comment was to include more practical and less theoretical knowledge.

The first political science major had four years experience as a political journalist as well as a masters degree in anthropology before becoming a teaching fellow. His/her teaching placement was in the second grade. In all areas, classroom management, lesson planning, content and professional knowledge, school mentors and other teachers in the school were given high and very high ratings. Graduate classes and consultants from the college were given moderate ratings. When asked to comment about the

graduate experience this individual said that graduate classes should include more classroom management techniques.

The second political science major was an educational director in an after-school program and was placed in a third grade classroom. In the areas of classroom management and lesson planning s/he rated the in-school personnel higher than graduate classes or college consultants. In contrast, graduate classes were rated the highest for content knowledge and were rated high, as were all sources, in the area of professional knowledge.

The economics major had prior experience in financial marketing and sales and was placed in a second grade classroom. For classroom management and lesson planning s/he gave only a moderate rating to graduate classes and a high rating to in-school personnel including the college supervisors. For content and professional knowledge, the graduate classes, other teachers in the school and school mentors were given high ratings. In additional comments, this individual requested the direct teaching of classroom management skills in graduate classes.

For all of the respondents, not only the six majors in history, political science and economics, the responses indicate they received the most information and support about how to manage their classrooms from other classroom teachers. The results show that the teaching fellows want the coursework at the college level to focus more on classroom management skills. In this regard the six case studies of social studies discipline majors demonstrate similar concerns as all of the sixty-seven respondents.

When all respondents were asked how much support and information they received about organizing a lesson, school mentors provided the most information and had the highest rating, followed by graduate coursework and other classroom teachers which had similar ratings, while the New York City consultants were seen as substantially less



helpful. All teaching fellows indicated that they received the most information about content knowledge from graduate coursework, with the consultants being the lowest in this area. Similar results were obtained when the teaching fellows were asked to rate the amount of information and support about professional knowledge (i.e., role as classroom teacher) they received.

The teaching fellows were asked to give an overall rating of how they found their experiences with each of the providers of information and support from the program. They rated classroom teachers as the most valuable providers of support and information; followed by college coursework, school mentor and the consultant. Consistently, consultants were perceived as the least helpful and supportive (O'Connor, Malow-Iroff, & Bisland, 2005).

Summary:

The six respondents in social studies disciplines fall within the parameters of the results for all respondents to the survey (O'Connor, Malow-Iroff, & Bisland, 2005). For sources of classroom management and lesson planning, either other teachers or in-school mentors were rated higher than graduate classes or consultants. In the area of content and professional knowledge the graduate classes were rated as high or higher sources than consultants, other teachers and mentors.

Even though the six respondents with majors in social studies disciplines in general did not rate highly the pedagogical and content knowledge gained from their graduate experience, they value the constructivist teaching theory that bases instruction on student experience and student questions. All of the six used social studies instruction based on student experience over half of their instructional time in social studies. In contrast, the use of instruction based on student questions was more mixed in its results and more limited than the use of instruction based on student experience in social studies. All but

one history major used direct instruction in social studies more than instruction based on student questions but less than instruction based on student experience. Only two of the six respondents used scripted lessons in social studies, one for twenty percent or less of instructional time and one for forty percent or less of instructional time.

### **Discussion**

There is a demonstrated desire on the part of all respondents in this study to use constructivist teaching strategies in their classrooms. This desire shows the application by the respondents of constructivist teaching theories into practice. More of the total respondents in this study used social studies instruction based on student experience (n=32, 51%) (see Table III) and student questions (n=17, 28%) (see Table IV) over fifty percent of instructional time than used direct instruction (n=11, 17%) (see Table I) or scripted lessons (n=7, 13%) (see Table II) over fifty percent of instructional time.

Of specific interest for social studies instruction in elementary schools is the use of constructivist pedagogy by the twenty respondents who have subject matter background because their undergraduate academic major is in a social science discipline. Because this group shows a preference for constructivist pedagogy in social studies at a higher percentage than the larger group of respondents (see Tables III, IV, VII, VIII), the findings of this study support the concept that a social science major will increase a teacher's comfort in using constructivist pedagogy in subjects that are part of social studies, including history, political science, economics and geography. These findings do not demonstrate, however, that the source of the social science majors comfort with constructivist pedagogy is their undergraduate major as opposed to courses in methodology that are part of their certification and master's degree program. The social science majors' preference for constructivist pedagogy may be a combination of social

science academic preparation combined with methods courses on the application of this knowledge to an elementary classroom.

Three-fourths of the social science majors ( $n=15$ , 75%), in contrast to fifty-one percent ( $n=32$ ) of the total respondents, use social studies instruction based on student experience over fifty percent of the time (see Table III, VII). Over one-third ( $n=7$ , 39%) of the social science majors in contrast to twenty-eight percent ( $n=17$ ) of the total respondents use social studies instruction based on student questions over fifty percent of the time (see Table IV, VIII). One fourth of the social science majors ( $n=5$ , 26%) in contrast to seventeen percent ( $n=11$ ) of the total respondents (see Table I, V) use direct instruction in social studies over fifty percent of the time. The same larger percentage of social science majors ( $n=5$ , 28%) in contrast to the total respondents ( $n=7$ , 13%) (see Table II, VI) use scripted lessons in social studies instruction over fifty percent of the time.

Even more specific to social studies instruction are those respondents who majored in the disciplines included in the social studies learning standards at the national and state level; history, political science, economics and geography. Their academic majors are even more specific to the actual subject matter covered in social studies education than the twenty social science majors.

More so than the social science majors ( $n=15$ , 75%) and the respondents in general ( $n=32$ , 51%), all six (100%) (see Table III, VII, IX) used instruction based on student experiences over fifty percent of the time. In contrast to the social science majors ( $n=7$ , 39%) (see Table VIII, IX), these six are not as comfortable with instruction based on student questions. One third ( $n=2$ , 34%) used this type of instruction in social studies over fifty percent of the time. However, a higher percentage of the six respondents used student questions for instruction over fifty percent of the time than did the total group of respondents ( $n=17$ , 28%) (see Table IV).

More than the social science majors (n=5, 26%) and the total group of respondents (n=11, 17%), one-half of these six (n=3, 50 %) (see Table I, V, IX) use direct instruction over fifty percent of the time. Unlike the social science majors (n=5, 28%) and the total number of respondents (n=7, 13%), none (n=0, 0%) (see Table II, IV, IX) of these six respondents use scripted lessons over fifty percent of the time in social studies.

A possible limitation in the phrasing of the survey question on instruction based on student questions may be the respondents' assumption that instruction based on student questions implies more teacher subject matter knowledge than instruction based on student experience implies. The respondents may assume that student questions mean questions that the student asks the teacher rather than instruction built on student inquiry. In student inquiry students ask questions and the teacher helps them to arrive at the answers themselves. Additionally, it should be noted that the use of scripted lessons is usually not the choice of the individual teacher, but mandated either the school or the school district.

Some argue that teachers do not need traditional educational programs that emphasize teaching methodology. They argue that preparation in content and subject matter is enough for an individual to be a good teacher (Kanstoroom & Finn, 1999; Paige, 2002; Walsh, 2001). The findings of this study do not support that argument. The total group of respondents request more emphasis on classroom management and demonstration lessons. The six respondents who have academic majors in the disciplines of social studies said that the greatest source of their content and professional knowledge was from their graduate teacher education courses (see Table IX).

These findings support the argument that even though prospective teachers master basic content knowledge and skills in undergraduate liberal arts requirements and majors, they may not have the conceptual understanding needed to respond to student questions

and take lessons beyond the transmission of basic information (Wilson, Floden and Ferrini-Mundy, 2002). In an overview of studies concerning teacher preparation in content courses, Wilson, Floden and Ferrini-Mundy (2002) found that teachers with content majors, such as history, often lack the deeper conceptual understanding necessary when responding to student questions and extending lessons beyond the basics. In contrast, the benefits of studying subject matter in the context of teaching or a subject matter methods course, as opposed to studying a subject as a distinct course or a subject matter major, was the focus of several studies. These studies found that education coursework, including subject-specific methods courses, is useful, sometimes having a higher correlation with student achievement than subject matter study by itself. Student achievement appears to be aided by teacher certification, which means that teachers have studied teaching methodologies (Darling-Hammond ,2000; Rowan, Correnti, and Miller,2002).

Griffin (1999) argues that a major in an academic discipline is necessary for teachers and that the academic disciplines must be transformed through teacher education programs into school subject matter that is developmentally appropriate for students. In response to this argument, the New York City Teaching Fellows program is a graduate program in which learning to teach comes after completion of a subject matter undergraduate degree. In this study constructivist pedagogy is emphasized in the teacher education courses taught in the respondent's graduate program.

This study demonstrates, however, a preference on the part of the respondents for a mixed method approach to constructivist pedagogy. This mixed method approach includes the use of direct instruction, because some skills and knowledge are most quickly and efficiently taught through a transfer of learning model (Richardson, 1999). Additionally, a mixed method approach acknowledges that a student may engage deeply

with a subject while listening to a lecture or reading a book, as well as while engaged in inquiry and conversation with other students.

The findings of this study support the use of teacher education courses in the transformation of academic knowledge into subject matter appropriate for elementary students as evidenced by the respondents' use of constructivist teaching practices as well as the respondents' acknowledgement that their graduate education classes are a source of that knowledge. These findings, as well as the need on the part of the teaching fellows for classroom management skills, help in the ongoing improvement and development of teacher education courses both in standard as well as alternatively certified programs.

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Table I

**Subject for Direct Instruction Cross Tabulated with Use of Direct Instruction**

Subject	% of Instructional Time				Total
	0-20	30-40	50-60	70-80	
Language Arts	1	2	1	1	5
Math	1	3			4
Social Studies		1			1
Language Arts & Math		1	1		2
Math & Science		3	1		4
Math & Social Studies		2	1		3
Science & Social Studies	1				1
Language Arts, Math & Science		1			1
Language Arts, Math & Social Studies	2		3		5
Language Arts, Science & Social Studies			1		1
Language Arts, Math, Science & Social Studies	1	24	11		36
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>63</b>

Table II

**Subject for Scripted Lessons Cross Tabulated with Use of Instructional Time for Scripted Lessons**

Subject	% of Instructional Time					Total
	0-20	30-40	50-60	70-80	90-100	
Language Arts	2		2		2	6
Math	6	4				10
Science	2	1				3
Social Studies	1					1
Language Arts & Math		1	1	4	1	7
Language Arts and Science	1		1			2
Math & Science	2		1			3
Science & Social Studies				1		1
Language Arts, Math & Science			2			2
Language Arts, Math & Social Studies		2		2		4
Language Arts, Science & Social Studies	1					1
Math, Science & Social Studies	1					1
Language Arts, Math, Science & Social Studies	3	4	4	1	2	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>55</b>

Table III

**Subject for Instruction Based on Student Experience Cross Tabulated with Class  
Instruction Time based on Student Experience**

Subject	% of Instructional Time					Total
	0-20	30-40	50-60	70-80	90-100	
Language Arts		1	1	2		4
Math			1			1
Language Arts & Math			2	1		3
Language Arts & Social Studies		1	1			2
Math and Science			2		1	3
Language Arts, Math & Social Studies		3	8	5		16
Language Arts, Math, Science & Social Studies	1	4	11	17	1	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>63</b>

Table IV

**Subject for Class Instruction based on Student Questions Cross Tabulated with  
Class Instruction Time based on Student Questions**

Subject	% of Instructional Time				Total	
	0-20	30-40	50-60	70-80		
Language Arts	1	1	1	1	4	
Math	1	1			2	
Science	1		1		2	
Language Arts & Math	2	1	1		4	
Language Arts and Science	1	1			2	
Language Arts & Social Studies		1	1	1	3	
Math & Science	1	1		2	4	
Science and Social Studies		1			1	
Language Arts, Math and Social Studies	2	1		1	4	
Language Arts, Science & Social Studies	3	3	1		7	
Math, Science & Social Studies			1		1	
Language Arts, Math, Science & Social Studies	3	7	11	5	1	27
<b>Total</b>	15	18	17	10	1	61

**Table V**

**Subject for Instruction Based on Direct Instruction Cross Tabulated with Undergraduate Social Science Major and Percentage of Instructional Time**

%of Instructional Time			Subject for direct instruction						Total
			LA	Math 2,4	3,4	1,2,1,3,4	1,2,4	3,4	
0-20%	<b>Undergrad Major</b>	Sociology			1			1	2
	<b>Total</b>				<b>1</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
30-40%	<b>Undergrad Major</b>	History	1					1	2
		Political Science						1	1
		Psychology	1					2	3
		Sociology						4	4
	<b>Total</b>		<b>2</b>					<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>
50-60%	<b>Undergrad Major</b>	East Asian Studies						1	1
		Economics						1	1
		History						1	1
		Psychology	1			1	1		3
		Urban Studies			1				1
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	
70-80%	<b>Undergrad Major</b>	Sociology	1						1
	<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>						<b>1</b>
	<b>Cumulative Total</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>

Table VI

**Subject for Instruction Based on Scripted Lessons Cross Tabulated with Undergraduate Social Science Major and Percentage of Instructional Time**

% of Instructional Time		Subject for Scripted Lesson							Total
		L A	Math	1,2	3,4	1,2, 1,3, 4	1,2, 1,3, 3,4	1,2, 3,4	
0-20%	Undergrad major							1	1
	Political Science							1	1
	Psychology							1	1
	Sociology	1	1						2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>					<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
30-40%	Undergrad major								
	History		2						2
	Political Science							1	1
	Psychology		1					1	2
	Sociology		1						1
	<b>Total</b>		<b>4</b>					<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>
70-80%	Undergrad major								
	Economics			1					1
	Psychology				1	2			3
	Sociology				1				1
	<b>Total</b>			<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>			<b>5</b>
90-100%	Undergrad major								
	History	1							1
	Sociology							2	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>						<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Cumulative Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>18</b>

1=Language Arts, 2=Math, 3=Science, 4=Social Studies

**Table VII**

**Subject for Instruction Based on Student Experience Cross Tabulated with Undergraduate Social Science Major and Percentage of Instructional Time**

% of Instructional Time			Subject for Student Experience				Total
			LA	1,4	1,2,4	1,2,3,4	
30-40 %	<b>Undergrad Major</b>	Psychology		1			1
		Sociology				1	1
		Urban Studies				1	1
	<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>
50-60 %	<b>Undergrad Major</b>	East Asian Studies				1	1
		Economics				1	1
		History			1	2	3
		Political Science				1	1
		Psychology	1			1	2
	Sociology			1	1	2	
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	
70-80 %	<b>Undergrad Major</b>	Political Science				1	1
		Psychology	1		1	1	3
	<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>Cumulative Total</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>20</b>

**1=Language Arts, 2=Math, 3=Science, 4=Social Studies**



Table VIII

**Subject for Instruction Based on Student Questions Cross Tabulated with Undergraduate Social Science Major and Percentage of Instructional Time**

% of Instructional Time		Subject for Student Questions						Total
		LA Math	1,2, 4	1,3, 4	2,3, 4	1,2, 3,4		
0-20 %	<b>Undergrad Major</b>							
	Political Science			1				1
	History				1			1
	Psychology	1						1
	Sociology		1					1
	Urban Studies					1		1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>5</b>
30-40 %	<b>Undergrad Major</b>							
	East Asian Studies					1		1
	Economics				1			1
	Psychology				1	2		3
	Sociology	1						1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>5</b>
50-60 %	<b>Undergrad Major</b>							
	History					1		1
	Sociology						2	2
	<b>Total</b>					<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
70-80 %	<b>Undergrad Major</b>							
	Political Science						1	1
	Psychology	1		1				2
	Sociology						2	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>			<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>Cumulative Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>
	<b>Total</b>						<b>8</b>	<b>18</b>

1=Language Arts, 2=Math, 3=Science, 4=Social Studies

Table IX

**Social Studies Disciplines Major and Types of Instruction**

Under - graduate Major	Types of Instruction and Percentage of Time							
	% S E	Subj S E	% D I	Subj D I	% S Q	Subj S Q	% S L	Subj S L
History	50-60	1,2,3,4	50-60	1,2,3,4	0-20	1,3,4	30-40	Math
History	50-60	1,2,4	30-40	Math	0-20	1,2,3,4	90-100	Lang Arts
History	50-60	1,2,3,4	30-40	1,2,3,4	50-60	2,3,4	30-40	Math
Political Science	70-80	1,2,3,4	50-60	1,2,3,4	0-20	1,3,4	0-20	1,2,3,4
Political Science	50-60	1,2,3,4	30-40	1,2,3,4	70-80	1,2,3,4	30-40	1,2,3,4
Economics	50-60	1,2,3,4	50-60	1,2,3,4	30-40	1,3,4	70-80	1,2

1=Language Arts, 2=Math, 3=Science, 4=Social Studies

**Types of Instruction:**

- **S E = Student Experience**
- **D I = Direct Instruction**
- **S Q = Student Questions**
- **S L = Scripted Lessons**