Beliefs and Issues in Social Studies Instructional Practices: A Case Study of Alternatively Certified Elementary Teachers

Paper presented at the College and University Faculty Assembly of the National Council for the Social Studies, Atlanta, GA., November 11, 2009

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the social studies teaching beliefs and the application of these beliefs into classroom practice of a group of elementary teachers who are part of a New York City alternative certification program. The teachers in this study are working in low performing New York City schools, are typically pursuing teaching as a second career and often have undergraduate majors in the social sciences as well.

Initial data for this study is extracted from a survey that the teachers completed in the second year of their two year program. Included in this survey are questions about the teachers' beliefs and practices in inquiry based constructivist teaching methodology. The survey results were compared to individual interviews and focus group discussions with selected teachers and observations of the teachers' classroom social studies teaching by their college supervisors. The authors anticipated an easier transition into teaching for a group of mature work experienced individuals than the typical transition of college graduates in their twenties with no prior full time work experience. Additionally the authors anticipated a greater ability to use the more complex teaching strategies involved in constructivist instruction than less experienced and mature teachers.

One unanticipated outcome of this study is the further substantiation of recent research on the marginalization of social studies instruction in the elementary schools (Boyle-Baise et al, 2008; Doppen, Misco & Patterson, 2008: Rock et al, 2006;Vanfossen, 2005). The uniqueness of this study is that the teachers are alternatively certified second career individuals who have selected teaching as a second career. The study further substantiates that teachers are

constrained in their ability to use constructivist practices, or teach social studies at all, by the emphasis in elementary school on reading and math instruction and integrated curriculum. This integration minimizes social studies concepts and skills in favor of other subjects, typically reading and literacy strategies and skills.

Traditionally descriptions and critiques of best instructional practice for teachers in all subject areas emphasizes student centered learning. Beginning in the early twentieth century, John Dewey (1969) advocated this type of classroom instruction which begins with the prior understandings and knowledge of students. Constructivist pedagogy, where students construct their own knowledge in a particular subject built on prior and new knowledge, continues to be the emphasis in teacher education programs across a century (Howe & Berv, 2000). In the specific area of social studies education and history education in particular, constructivist teaching practices are based on students making sense of the past and present the world through a variety of prior and ongoing experiences, both in and out of school. (Levstik & Barton, 2001; Wilson et al, 2002; Wineberg, 1996; VanSledright, 2002).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the social studies teaching beliefs and practices of a group of elementary teachers participating in the New York City Teaching Fellows program, an alternative certification program. These teachers are pursuing certification as elementary teachers by attending master's level classes while they teach in low performing New York City schools. This concurrence of classroom teaching and methods courses offers a unique opportunity to study teachers engaged in pedagogical methods study and also teaching full time, rather than the more traditional pre-service students who are yet to teach full time.

In addition many of the Teaching Fellows are pursuing teaching as a second career and have already spent many years as a member of the professional work force. We anticipate that this previous experience will be a positive influence in the initial transition from school to work, which can be difficult for undergraduates who obtain teaching certification without previous full

time work experience. We anticipate therefore that an easier transition would result in a greater ability to use the more complex teaching strategies involved in constructivist instruction.

Since the program is at the masters level, the teaching fellows have undergraduate degrees and many majored in the social sciences. Typically elementary teachers who obtain teaching certification as undergraduates have little background in the social sciences on which the social studies are based (Wilson et al, 2002; Wilson & Wineberg, 1988; Wineberg, 1996; Wineberg & Wilson,1991).

The teacher certification program of the study's participants emphasizes constructivist and inquiry based teaching practices in its social studies methods courses, as well as in methods courses in other disciplines. For this study the respondents completed a survey during the second year of their two year program. Part of this survey is questions about their beliefs and practices in inquiry based constructivist teaching. The focus of this study is the responses for social studies instruction. The survey results were compared to teacher interviews concerning the successes and the constraints encountered in using constructivist pedagogy and observations of their social studies teaching practice by college supervisors.

Constructivist Pedagogy

In general, constructivist teaching practices concern the creation of student understandings based on an interaction between what the student already knows and believes and new ideas and knowledge that the student encounters in a learning environment (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 type 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 is centered on direct teacher instruction and often has limited success in the attainment and retention of new knowledge:

> 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 social studies, which emphasizes the study of history in the upper elementary and secondary grades, 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 prior knowledge and experiences and resources found in traditional print and audio and video media (Levstik & Barton, 2001; Wineberg, 1996; VanSledright, 1996, VanSledright, 2002). In a traditional transmission style classroom, students view history as facts to be memorized and do not understand that their own judgments and experiences with 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).

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 is called the Teaching Fellows Program and addresses the teacher shortage in their schools. 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).

Methodology

In the last year of their certification program, sixty-three teachers in the New York City Teaching Fellows Program completed a survey to gauge their overall experiences in their classroom teaching and in their college courses. The first part of this study is based on survey questions concerning different types of classroom instructional practices in social studies. The questions are a self-report by the teachers of how much they believe in and use constructivist pedagogy. The questions focus primarily on the contrast between teacher centered learning and student constructed learning. The responses to the questions were used to determine how much, if at all, these teachers advocate constructivist or student centered instruction in social studies and how much they report using this type of instruction.

The second part of the study consists of interviews of approximately two thirds of the teaching fellows in groups and individually. The purpose of the interviews and focus groups is to clarify and develop the teachers' understanding of the constructivist pedagogy questions on the survey. The interview questions also asked the teachers to discuss the ease or difficulty of engaging students in this methodology in an actual classroom setting.

In the third part of the study, written observations of the teachers by their college supervisors are examined to see how much inquiry based constructivist teaching was observed in the participants actual social studies teaching.

The Teaching Fellows' Perspective on Constructivist Teaching: The Survey

The following questions were asked in the survey:

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 ranged from zero to one hundred with ten percent increments except for zero to twenty percent. The subject matter choices are the major curriculum areas taught in elementary schools; language arts, math, science and social studies. The purpose of the four questions is to determine if the teachers try to construct learning from the students experience and questions or if they as the teacher direct the learning or use scripted lessons. The survey asked for responses in all subject areas. This study focuses on the response for social studies instruction only.

Findings from the Survey

Question 1: Use of Direct Instruction: Of sixty-three respondents to the survey, eleven said that they used direct instruction in social studies over half of their instructional time. Twenty five of the respondents use direct instruction for social studies between thirty and forty percent of their instructional time. The remaining respondents (27) used direct instruction less than thirty percent of their instructional time (See Table I).

Question 2: Use of Scripted Lessons: Seven of the respondents used scripted lessons in social studies over fifty percent of their instructional time and seven used scripted lessons for less than fifty percent of their instructional time. One of the respondents said that they used scripted lessons in social studies for up to twenty percent of instructional time. The remaining forty-eight respondents did not use scripted lessons in social studies (See Table II).

Question 3: Class Instruction Based on Student Experiences: Twenty-nine of the respondents, almost half of the teachers, report that they base their instruction in social studies on student experiences between half and one hundred percent of their instructional time. Ten of the

respondents said that they never base their instruction in social studies on student experiences. The remaining twenty four respondents reported using this type of instruction less than half of their instructional time (See Table III).

Question 4: Instruction Based on Student Questions: Seventeen of the teachers reported using instruction based on student questions in social studies from one half to one hundred percent of their instructional time. Eighteen respondents never use instruction based on student questions in social studies. The remaining twenty seven teachers reported using instruction based on student questions in social studies but less than half of their instructional time (See Table IV).

The first question, which concerns direct instruction, does not exclude constructivist pedagogy. Direct instruction, which includes lectures and non-interactive media such as video presentations, 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 teaching in which the teacher decides and delivers content and the student is expected to absorb the information.

Also the second question about scripted lessons does not prevent the use of constructivist pedagogy. Scripted lessons 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 schools where the teachers in this study are placed do not appear to follow this model. The lessons appear to be a highly structured model of direct instruction first developed for at risk young students in disadvantaged urban schools (Engelmann, 1999; Stager, 2004). In this type of highly structured curriculum little opportunity is allowed for teachers to engage in interactive activities of their own choosing (Crocco &

Costigan, 2007). Often the expectation is that a teacher will be at a specific place in the script at a specific time of day.

This expectation seems to indicate that there is little time for interaction with students in order to aid them in constructing knowledge outside of very specific time limitations. In later interviews one teacher said 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 constructing student knowledge.

The last two questions in the survey are designed to determine the use of constructivist pedagogy by basing instruction on the students' life experiences, interests and questions.

All respondents in this study self reported the use of constructivist teaching strategies in social studies for part of their instructional time. Over half of the respondents reported using social studies instruction based on student experience at least fifty percent of instructional time (n=32, 51%) (See Table III). Over a fourth of the teachers reported basing instruction on student questions over fifty percent of the time (n=17, 28%) (See Table IV). Under twenty percent of the teachers reported using direct instruction (n=11, 17%) (See Table I) or scripted lessons (n=7, 13%) (see Table II) over fifty percent of instructional time.

It is possible that teacher respondents assumed student questions meant questions that the student expects the teacher to answer rather than instruction built on student inquiry questions for their own investigation. They may think that instruction based on student questions implies a need for greater teacher subject matter knowledge than instruction based on student experience. In their class instruction teachers may avoid encouraging questions if they feel a lack of content knowledge. In student inquiry students ask questions and the teacher helps them to arrive at the answers themselves, therefore not requiring an immediate recall of content by the teacher.

Additionally, it should be noted that the use of scripted lessons is usually not the choice of the individual teacher, but mandated either by the school or the school district.

This self-report survey demonstrates a preference on the part of the teachers for a mixed method approach to constructivist pedagogy rather than a strictly constructivist approach. This mixed method approach includes the use of direct instruction. Some skills and knowledge are most quickly and efficiently taught through a transfer of learning model. 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. (Richardson, 1999; 2003).

Many of the teachers' responses indicate the use of a mix of instructional methods that include constructivist methods for part of their social studies instructional time and direct instruction and/or scripted lessons for the rest of their instructional time. Because of the open ended nature of the four questions and the possibility of differing interpretations, it was necessary to clarify and develop the results of the survey with respondent interviews and observations of their teaching by their college supervisors.

Constraints on Constructivist Teaching Practice: Teaching Fellow Interviews

During their social studies methods course in the last semester of course work, twenty of the teacher respondents were asked to respond individually to an example of a constructivist lesson in American history based on student inquiry. The purpose is to gain further understanding of the teachers' attitudes towards constructivist pedagogy by their reactions to and thoughts on a detailed discussion of a constructivist inquiry lesson in American history. The lesson involves a fifth grade classroom in which students are asked to use primary source documents on the

American Revolution to construct their knowledge about that particular time in history (VanSledright, 2002).

In interviews the teachers were asked how they would incorporate this approach into their classrooms and what they considered to be the advantages and the disadvantages of an inquiry based constructivist method of teaching social studies, and history in particular.

One teacher saw the advantages of an inquiry based constructivist approach to history and social studies (Interview 1):

> I feel the article has vital information about making history exciting and relevant to the students' lives. I love how the author focused on the importance of making sense of historical evidence, judging the reliability and perspective of the documents, and teaching the students how to construct evidence based interpretations. I always found history so boring because my teacher lectured for 45 minutes and the only pictures I was exposed to were the monotonous pictures in the textbook.

Another teacher was concerned about the limitations to this type of instruction (Interview 2):

…allotting time for students to do extensive research . . . poses a problem.

A third teacher expressed concern about the use of inquiry to construct knowledge with students in a low performing public school which is the placement for most of the New York City Teaching Fellows (Interview 3):

> One disadvantage of the method is that it may be hard for students who have lower reading and comprehension skills to learn history solely by analyzing documents. It will also be difficult for students who are new to the country and just learning the language.

A fourth teacher was concerned about time and resources (Interview 4):

> We just don't have enough time in a day or the resources necessary.

A fifth teacher appreciated the inquiry method as a means to move away from traditional direct instruction, particularly in history. Additionally this teacher related an inquiry constructivist model to the fifth grade state wide social studies test in New York (Interview 5):

> I love (the) point about giving children the opportunity to voice their thoughts and opinions. So often we remove their opinions from history because it is "cut and dried"- either it happened or it didn't in many teachers' minds. However history is full of differing opinions and subjects that can really get students thinking if we encourage them
>
> The author's method involved the use of documents, which is a huge part of the state's testing methods.

One fifth grade teacher was blunt in his assessment of social studies instruction in the New York City schools, his need to prepare students for the fifth grade test, which is administered in November of the fifth grade year, and his opportunities to teach with a constructivist approach (Interview 6):

> I would love to select activities and dream up the many different ways I would use them in my class. But in reality, I would never be able to use any of them in my classroom. The truth is that at my school students are not taught social studies on any level before the fifth grade. When I receive the students I have literally two and a half months to prepare them for the test. I have to cram two hundred years of history into students who can not even name the fifty states. Plus, I have to teach them how to take these tests. The social studies test requires (a student to) be able to look at a picture and locate the central idea of the picture or document. I am not saying that the article does not have good ideas. They are just unrealistic for city teachers.
>
> The individual interviews uncovered issues that are not readily discernable in the survey.

With a full description of a constructivist inquiry based lesson the teachers' responses extend and give depth to the full groups responses about using student experiences and student questions to teach social studies. A positive attitude towards constructivist inquiry is expressed but not without issues from their classroom experiences. The outside issues that appear in the interview are: the amount of time in the school day to use constructivist methods in teaching; the ability of students in low performing schools to engage in constructivist inquiry and the need to prepare for the state wide test in social studies, which often means engaging in test prep activities.

A focus group was conducted with twenty of the teaching fellows during the final year in the program. This group did not participate in the individual interviews. They were asked first to describe how constructivist teaching is conducted in a typical elementary classroom. Because the question addressed constructivist teaching in all subjects and not exclusively social studies, the discussion of teaching strategies quickly focused on teaching reading/literacy and math. As elsewhere (Boyle-Baise et al, 2008), in New York City these subjects are the primary concern of elementary teachers and they are held accountable for their students' scores in these subjects. When asked how the different instructional strategies related to social studies instruction, they pointed out that they seldom taught social studies and that they were held accountable for how their students performed in reading and math, not social studies. It is important to note that reading and math tests in New York State are pupil-based tests, so scores determine whether a student progresses to the next grade. The fifth grade social studies test in New York state is a program test and does not measure a student's progress and is not used to determine promotion. Therefore the accountability of the teacher is not as great as in math and reading.

As a comparison, the teachers were asked what direct instructions looked like and meant. Several of the teaching fellows pointed out a lesson plan design in all subjects that they are required to use by the New York City Board of Education. The lesson begins with directions and modeling of student outcomes. In contrast to Dewey's definition of direct instruction as the teacher telling and the student listening, the fellows saw direct instruction as the teacher giving directions including setting goals for instruction and steering the students towards those goals as the students practice inquiry and constructivism in their work in their individual or groups work

The bulk of the discussion centered on scripted lessons and the extent that the teaching fellows can use their own ideas of instruction within the script. The two scripted curriculums

used in the elementary schools of New York City are in reading/literacy and math, not in social studies or science. Some of the teachers reported latitude in using their own ideas and constructivist strategies within scripted lessons. Others reported that they could not make their own decisions and were expected to be at a particular place in the script at a particular time. They were checked by school administration to make sure that they were complying with the script.

The teachers indicated that a model lesson plan they used could accommodate constructivist strategies in a mixed method format. The focus group discussion quickly moved away from constructivist pedagogy to the teacher's concerns about accountability in math and reading instruction. It became evident that theteachers' schools and districts valued the teaching of these two subjects above the teaching of social studies and reflects findings in other parts of the United States (Boyle-Baise et al, 2008; Doppen, Misco & Patterson, 2008: Rock et al, 2006;Vanfossen, 2005). Also a very specific finding from the individual interviews and the focus group is that even though social studies is tested in the elementary schools of New York City, it is not systematically taught across grade levels. It appears to be taught intensely in the beginning of the fifth grade year prior to the test in November. Even with the existence of a test, social studies is still marginalized in the elementary schools of New York City.

Constructivist Theory into Practice: Observations of Teaching Fellows by College Supervisors

As part of the certification program for the teaching fellows, each teacher is observed an average of five times during the first school year and twice during the second school year. The college adjunct personnel who conduct the observations are primarily retired supervisors from the New York City public schools. Of approximately three hundred observations of sixty-three teaching fellows over a two year span, only eleven percent or approximately thirty three of the

observed lessons had either social studies content or skills. Of this group of social studies lessons, all were integrated with another subject, usually literacy but occasionally science and/or math.

Of equal significance to the lack of an observation in social studies exclusively was the teachers' schedule for social studies instruction. Without exception social studies instruction was in the afternoon, when all students, especially young students, are not at their most refreshed and attentive. In at least half of these schedules social studies was integrated with literacy or alternated with science. Only in the fifth and sixth grade was social studies instruction scheduled by itself once a day, but it was always in the afternoon. In the lower grades it was typically scheduled once a week. The focus group and individual interviews of the teaching fellows verify that social studies is taught infrequently. It is significant to note in regard to this scheduling that the New York statewide standardized test in social studies is given in the fifth grade and also in he eighth grade. An assumption can be made that the more frequent teaching of social studies in the upper grades is aligned with a perceived need for test preparation.

One example of an integrated lesson that combined social studies with literacy was the use of a children's book, *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt* (1993). This book focuses on communication in slave societies of the pre-civil war South. In particular the book shows how quilts were used as maps and how oral communication was maintained between the slaves living on plantations distant from each other. The teacher, however, did not focus on the history content learning available through the book, but on literacy strategies using prediction and verification, in which the children anticipate what will happen in the book and then check as the book is read to see if their predictions are correct or incorrect. This literacy strategy has the possibility of social studies content learning about society in the pre-civil war South and the use of

constructivist learning through historical inquiry. As the children predict the books narrative they access their prior knowledge in the content area and then assess and build on that prior knowledge as the book is read. The college supervisor did not indicate that the purpose of the lesson was to develop this type of historical content knowledge, however. Therefore the strength of the lesson was in literacy learning and development in anticipation and confirmation that did not place the book's content into a larger historical context.

Another example of an integrated lesson combined math with social studies in the fourth grade. The teacher focused on how to read and use a calendar. Although calendar reading is a useful social studies skill for the understanding and acquisition of dates, the understanding of historical time in terms of centuries and time periods is a more significant social studies understanding and was not addressed in this lesson (Barton,2002).

Two integrated lessons that had the greatest development of either social studies skills or content were lessons that focused on rainforests and the late nineteenth century American West. The rainforest lesson used *The Great Kapok Tree*, a children's book on the destruction of the rainforests. Although emphasis in the lesson was on new vocabulary words and predictions, the children were asked to focus on why the rainforests should be saved and to think critically about what will result if the rainforests disappear. The destruction of rainforests is an issue of social concern that bridges both science and social studies in relation to human interactions with the environment and government decision making and policy. To ask children to think critically about this issue is definitely a social studies skill and contextualizes the lesson into a social studies content area of issues of global concern.

The second lesson used two short story books that supplement the social studies text. One story concerned orphans who were sent from eastern industrial cities to families in the West at

the end of the nineteenth century and the second concerned working cowboys in the West during the same period. The literacy purpose of the lesson was for students to identify and give examples of figurative language. Questions were asked by the teacher, however, that encouraged the students to consider in depth the role of cowboys in driving cattle from Texas to rail heads in Kansas and the reasons westerners advertised for orphans to come and live with them. Again this methodology is an example of students accessing their prior knowledge and acquiring new knowledge, but the emphasis of the lesson was on the literacy goals. Additionally the books were not used within a unit of study on the post civil war West. As in the use of the book *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt* earlier, the book was chosen for its literary value and not to enrich and extend the study of an historical period in social studies. Therefore in neither lesson were the students studying a particular historical era in which they could contextualize their new knowledge and understandings. This use of social studies material to teach skills in another curriculum area is an ongoing concern of social studies educators (Alleman & Brophy,1993).

Discussion

This study explores the social studies instructional beliefs and practices of a unique group of teachers. They differ from traditional beginning teachers because most are mature individuals who were in the work force previously and are making a career change. Additionally unlike other elementary teachers who have undergraduate teaching certification, many of the teaching fellows have undergraduate majors in one of the social sciences.

One of the first assumptions in the establishment of the Teaching Fellows program by New York City was that there is a “substantial pool of talented individuals who have chosen other career options but who are capable of and interested in becoming excellent teachers” (US Office of Education, 2009, p.41). Given these attributes this study begins with the anticipation that the

teaching fellows are uniquely able to adapt quickly to the school workplace and adopt challenging teaching strategies such as constructivism and historical inquiry. It appears, however, that this group of teachers did not adopt constructivist methodology to teach social studies, particularly history, readily. What is important to determine is why they did not.

In the survey self report of sixty three teachers over half that they used student experiences in their social studies teaching from fifty percent to one hundred percent of their instructional time. One third of the teachers reported using student questions from fifty percent to one hundred percent of their instructional time. This self report data was not substantiated in the individual interviews and focus groups. In the individual interviews about a constructivist lesson that incorporated students building on their prior knowledge and experiences in a lesson on the American Revolution, responses indicated that the teachers did not have enough time nor did they think their students had the ability for this type of lesson. It appears from the individual interviews, the focus groups and the teacher schedules and observations that the time spent on social studies is not great. Therefore spending half to one-hundred percent of their instructional time on constructivist strategies results in very little actual time.

This study supports previous research (Thornton, 1991) showing that the beliefs and self reports of teachers concerning the use of constructivist teaching practice in social studies is not always substantiated in observations of their classroom instruction. Additionally a strong relationship was not established between teachers with an undergraduate major in the social sciences and use of constructivist social studies instruction (See Table V-IX). A lack of content knowledge is given as a reason why elementary school teachers are not strong social studies teachers (Wilson & Wineberg, 1988; Wineberg, 1996; Wineberg & Wilson,1991). Typically elementary teachers do not have content background in disciplines such as history, geography

and political science. Consequently, they are not familiar with the processes of inquiry, such as use of authentic resources and contrasting perspectives, that are used in social sciences research. This unfamiliarity makes it difficult to develop inquiry based teaching strategies for their classrooms. In contrast, many of the teachers in this study did have social science undergraduate majors, but there was not a strong connection between those with undergraduate social science majors and the use of constructivist methodology in social studies instruction (See Table V-IX). The constraints of schools that are concerned with testing under the No Child Left Behind legislation may be a greater reason for a lack of inquiry based constructivist teaching than the limitations in the teachers' background.

The teacher interviews and classroom observations demonstrate that their disinclination to teach social studies using constructivist methodology and inquiry has little to do with their content and pedagogical preparation and much more to do with the emphasis of national legislation on instruction and testing in math and reading. The teaching schedules of the teaching fellows across the two years demonstrate this emphasis. These limitations in scheduling in the New York City schools have been explored and documented for middle and high school teachers (Crocco & Costigan, 2007). This study extends the discussion to elementary teachers in the New York City schools.

With the development of standardized testing through No Child Left Behind legislation, instruction is increasingly driven by test preparation. In the elementary schools the test emphasis is on reading and math (Duplass, 2007; *Education Week*, 2005; Passe, 2006). Even in New York State, which is one of a small number of states that tests for social studies skills and knowledge in the elementary grades (*Education Week,* 2005), social studies is marginalized in the elementary school curriculum. This marginalization is similar to states that do not test for social

studies in elementary school (Duplass, 2007, Passe, 2006). In the New York City schools a strong emphasis on social studies in elementary school does not occur until the beginning of the fifth grade and consists primarily of test preparation that ends abruptly after the social studies test is given in mid-November. As this study shows, when social studies instruction does occur outside of the beginning of fifth grade it is infrequent particularly in the lower elementary grades and is usually integrated with other curriculum areas. As a result of federal legislation for No Child Left Behind a much greater emphasis in all elementary grades is placed on reading, literacy and math skills acquisition(Bailey et al, 2006; Duplass, 2007, Passe, 2006).

Another issue in this study is the teachers' perception of what constitutes history and social studies content instruction and what does not and is reflected in the self report of social studies instruction. The integration of content instruction is encouraged in the elementary schools where most teachers are in a self contained classroom and teach all content areas. It is most likely that the integration of social studies will occur with reading and literacy instruction. This integration is demonstrated in this study's supervisor observations and in the focus group interview and self report. Some teachers in the self report said they used scripted lessons in social studies instruction. In contrast in the group interviews teachers said that no scripts were used in social studies. The literacy curriculum is scripted in the New York City schools. If the topic for a literacy lesson is in the social studies content area, teachers assume the lesson is a form of scripted social studies.

One problem with curriculum integration is that skills and dispositions in specific content area, such as science or social studies, will be diminished. The emphasis often is on the skills in the literacy and math curriculum. Particularly in literacy integration, it is the students' improvement in reading that is emphasized not acquisition of historical or social science

understandings and information. The social studies content becomes a platform on which to teach literacy skills and little if any significant social studies learning takes place (Alleman & Brophy, 2002; Brophy & Alleman, 1993).

The observations in this study show that teachers used constructivist skills to teach literacy and reading, such as prediction and verification in reading a story. Consequently some of the teachers' self report on the use of constructivist techniques may have assumed that if the subject matter of the literacy lesson was history or another social studies topic, then they were teaching social studies in a constructivist manner. The teachers may have made this assumption even though the constructivist techniques used were not based on social studies skills, such as map understanding or the sequencing of events with cause and effect, but on reading and literacy development skills.

This study is significant because it furthers the discussion of elementary teachers and the teaching of social studies, in particular in a state that tests social studies at the elementary level. The study continues a discussion of previous findings on elementary teachers' background in social science content and its effect on teaching social studies with students' construction of their own knowledge. This study compares previous findings about elementary teachers and the teaching of social studies to a more mature and work experienced elementary teacher population. It also extends the discussion of constraints on teachers' ability to use constructivist methodology to the climate and structure of elementary schools.

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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	
Social Studies		1			1
Math & Social Studies		2	1		3
Science & Social Studies	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

Total	6	37	19	1	63

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**
Social Studies	1				1
Science & Social Studies				1	1
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
Total	19	12	11	8	5	55

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 & Social Studies		1	1			2
Language Arts, Math & Social Studies		3	8	5		16
Language Arts, Math, Science & Social Studies	1	4	11	17	1	34
Total	1	9	26	25	2	63

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 & Social Studies		1	1	1		3
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

Total			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

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

			Subject for direct instruction					**Total**
%of Instructional Time			LA	Math	2,4	3,4	1,2, 1,3, 1,2, 4 4 3,4	
0-20%	**Undergrad Major**	Sociology				1	1	2
	Total					**1**	**1**	**2**
30-40%	**Undergrad Major**	History		1			1	2
		Political Science					1	1

		Psychology	1					2	3
		Sociology						4	4
	Total		**2**					**8**	**10**
50-60%	**Undergrad**	East Asian Studies						1	1
	Major								
		Economics						1	1
		History						1	1
		Psychology	1			1	1		3
		Urban Studies		1					1
	Total		**1**	**1**		**1**	**1**	**2**	**6**
70-80%	**Undergrad**	Sociology	1						1
	Major								
	Total		**1**						**1**
	Cumulative		**2**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**11**	**19**
	Total								

Table VI

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

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

			Subject for Scripted Lesson							**Total**
% of Instructional Time			L A	Math	1,2	3,4	1,2, 4	1,3, 4	1,2, 3,4	
0-20%	Undergrad major	Political Science							1	1
		Psychology						1		1
		Sociology	1	1						2
	Total		**1**	**1**				**1**	**1**	**4**

30-40%	Undergrad major	History		2					2
		Political Science						1	1
		Psychology		1				1	2
		Sociology		1					1
	Total			**4**				**2**	**6**
70-80%	Undergrad major	Economics			1				1
		Psychology				1	2		3
		Sociology			1				1
	Total				**2**	**1**	**2**		**5**
90-100%	Undergrad major	History	1						1
		Sociology						2	2
	Total		**1**					**2**	**3**
	Cumulative Total		**2**	**5**	**2**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**5**	**18**

Table VII

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

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

			Subject for Student Experience				
% of Instructional Time			LA	1,4	1,2,4	1,2,3,4	Total
30-40 %	**Undergrad Major**	Psychology		1			1
		Sociology				1	1
		Urban Studies				1	1
	Total		**1**	**1**		**2**	**4**

50-60 %	**Undergrad Major**	East Asian Studies				1	1
		Economics				1	1
		History			1	2	3
		Political Science				1	1
		Psychology	1			1	2
		Sociology			1	1	2
	Total		**1**		**2**	**7**	**10**
70-80 %	**Undergrad Major**	Political Science				1	1
		Psychology	1		1	1	3
		Sociology				3	3
	Total		**1**		**1**	**5**	**7**
	Cumulative Total		**3**	**1**	**3**	**14**	**20**

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

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

			Subject for Student Questions						**Total**
% of Instructional Time			LA	Math	1,2	1,2, 4	1,3, 4	2,3, 4	1,2, 3,4	
0-20 %	**Undergrad Major**	Political Science					1			1
		History					1			1
		Psychology	1							1
		Sociology			1					1
		Urban Studies							1	1
	Total		**1**		**1**		**2**		**1**	**5**

30-40 %	**Undergrad**	East Asian Studies			1	1
	Major					
		Economics		1		1
		Psychology		1	2	3
		Sociology	1			1
	Total		**1**	**2**	**2**	**5**
50-60 %	**Undergrad**	History			1	1
	Major					
		Sociology			2	2
	Total			**1**	**2**	**3**
70-80 %	**Undergrad**	Political Science			1	1
	Major					

	Psychology	1			1			2
	Sociology						2	2
Total		**1**			**1**		**3**	**5**
Cumulative Total		**2**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**4**	**1**	**8**	**18**

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

Table IX

Social Studies Disciplines Major and Types of Instruction

Types of Instruction and Percentage of Time

Under - graduate Major	% 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	70-80	1,2,3,4	50-60	1,2,3,4	0-20	1,3,4	0-20	1,2,3,4

Science

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**
- **SQ =Student Questions**
- **SL = Scripted Lessons**