

**A Longitudinal Study of Learning to Teach History as Interpretation**

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**Abstract**

*Over the past decade many social studies educators have called for teachers to engage their students in historical interpretation. This case study examined the beliefs and practices related to engaging students in historical interpretation of four secondary social studies teachers from their teacher preparation through their first year in the classroom. The results corroborated arguments that classroom control and a limited understanding of history content are major barriers preventing teachers from teaching history as interpretation. However, the results also found teachers believed a better development of their own practical “toolkit” to engage their students in historical interpretation would have helped them overcome these barriers.*

Democracy requires citizens not only to do the work of democracy, but also have a deep understanding of it. Parker (2002) noted, “citizens are not ‘natural’—born already grasping the principles of democracy such as tolerance, equality and impartial justice, or the need to limit majority power” (p. ix). The people of the United States have long looked to the history/social studies classroom as a place to foster democratic citizenship. Yet, there are reasons to be concerned about the future of democracy in the United States. As schools become increasingly focused on standardized curricula and high stakes testing, the traditional role of schools and social studies classrooms as the incubators of democracy may be diminished and, in more extreme situations, such as the recent political heated Texas history curriculum debates, even replaced with indoctrination. As politicians increasingly pressure history teachers to have their students commit to memory extensive (and possibly politically motivated) lists of historical names, dates,

and events through mandated curricula and standardized testing, we move further away from education for democracy.

There are strong arguments that students should not simply be passive receivers of historical facts, but should instead learn history through an active engagement in forms of historical interpretation (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Levstik & Barton, 2001; VanSledright, 2002; Wineburg, 2001). Similar to how citizens<sup>1</sup> in a democracy must work together to solve problems, students should work together to solve historical problems, using historical facts and documentary accounts as the evidence for making meaning of the past. More importantly, this view of history education may present conflicting information or incomplete evidence that helps students see that history is not a set story, but rather something that requires investigation and presents controversy. History is not simply a set of known facts to be learned, but rather something students must construct, debate, and in some cases even struggle to make sense of.

Teacher preparation programs offer one place where prospective history teachers learn to teach history as interpretation. Yet, Barton and Levstik (2004) argued that while many history teachers embrace a view of instruction in which students are active learners constructing knowledge or learning about multiple viewpoints, this is not always reflected in their classroom practices. History teacher education appears to be successful in influencing prospective teachers' beliefs, but not changing their practices. If we can figure out why there is often a disconnect between history teachers' beliefs and their practices, then we can find ways to better develop their ability to teach history as interpretation. Ultimately, this can also increase prospective teachers' abilities to teach

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<sup>1</sup> My definition of democratic citizenship applies to all members in a democratic society, regardless of their documentation or legal immigrant status. As such, the schools do not exist to only educate the native born or naturalized students about democracy, but educate all students about democracy.

for democratic citizenship, as they will be better prepared to develop their students' ability to do the work of democracy.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study examined how beginning teachers learn to teach history as interpretation, which was one part of a larger longitudinal study that examined the development of the constructivist beliefs and practices of beginning history teachers over time (Martell, 2011). The following research questions were asked in this component of the larger study: *How do the teachers describe teaching history as interpretation? Are the teachers able to teach history as interpretation in their classroom? If so, what supported their development of teaching history as interpretation? If not, what were the barriers to teaching history as interpretation, and what do these teachers suggest would help overcome these barriers?*

This study addresses some of the gaps in the research on learning to teach. Several reviews of research on teaching and learning in history (Downey & Levstik, 1991; Paxton & Wineburg, 2000; Wineburg, 1996) and social studies teacher education (Adler, 1991; Armento, 1996; Banks & Parker, 1990) have documented scant research in these fields. Along these same lines, few studies follow preservice teachers from preservice to inservice (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005) and this type of research is incredibly rare in social studies (Adler, 1991, 2008; Armento, 1996; Banks & Parker, 1990; Clift & Brady, 2005). It is crucial that we gain a better understanding of how history teachers form their beliefs and practices during their

student teaching, but also how those beliefs and practices continue to develop into their first years in the classroom.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study is situated within the perspective that history should be taught as interpretation, rather than a fixed story of the past to be learned and simply retold. Rooted in constructivist theories of teaching and learning, I use the concept of *teaching history as interpretation* to describe a type of pedagogy that aims to help students not only understand other peoples' interpretations of the past, but also help them learn to construct their own interpretations of past. From this view, a history classroom will focus on having students use inquiry to answer historical questions using evidence, compare past and present perceptions of historical events, and take a stance in historical debates. When history is learned as interpretation, students will better develop an understanding that history is composed of multiple competing perspectives, is constructed and debated by humans, and that they are part of the process of history making.

Historical inquiry is an important component of teaching history as interpretation. Barton and Levstik (2004) offer one definition of historical inquiry as a process involving, "asking questions, gathering and evaluating relevant evidence, and reaching conclusions based on that evidence" (p. 188). It is a process that involves significant reflection, where students attempt to resolve questions by examining historical evidence. Barton and Levstik have argued that there is a strong match between inquiry as an instructional method and constructivism as a learning theory, and that students who engage in inquiry will ultimately know more about history.

Several studies of learning to teach secondary school history over the last 15 years inform this research. These studies revealed two important findings. First, there is evidence that in some teacher preparation programs, preservice history teachers can develop a positive view of historical inquiry and history as interpretation (Fehn & Koeppen, 1998; Seixas, 1998; Wilson, Konopak, & Readence, 1994; Yeager & Wilson, 1997). Second, preservice teachers struggle with using historical inquiry and teaching history as interpretation in their classrooms (Mayer, 2006; Wilson, et al., 1994), especially when classroom management issues arise (van Hover & Yeager, 2004). However, none of these studies were longitudinal and did not follow the same beginning teachers into their first years of teaching, so we lack deeper understanding of how these beliefs and practices may change over time.

Four studies showed preservice teachers can develop a positive view historical inquiry. Wilson, Konopak, and Readence (1994) examined 11 preservice teachers' beliefs and practices about secondary social studies education, including history education. Through an analysis of survey data, the researchers concluded that the preservice teachers developed a positive view that students learn through knowledge construction and students should be asked questions with no definitive answer. Through a case study analysis involving interviews and observations, Yeager and Wilson (1997) examined 30 teachers in a methods course. Their results revealed that most students had positive attitudes toward historical thinking and a disposition toward implementing inquiry-based activities. Seixas (1998) examined how preservice teachers learn to use primary sources in their methods course. Through a case study, he found preservice teachers were able to choose documents for their lesson plans that showed thinking in the past was

substantially different than thinking today. Finally, Fehn and Koeppen (1998) examined the extent to which student teachers used historical documents during their student teaching. They found that all the student teachers used primary source documents at least once during student teaching, and also asked their students to interpret and analyze the documents they used.

On the other hand, two studies showed that preservice teachers struggled with using historical inquiry in their student teaching classrooms. When Wilson, et al. (1994) extended their study into student teaching, they found one preservice teacher, who believed in using inquiry-based methods, became heavily reliant on the textbooks, lectures, and films. In a case study of a student teacher, Mayer (2006) found despite her routine use of multiple primary sources together, the student teacher rarely had students compare competing accounts of historical events. These two studies were unable to find strong evidence as to *why* these preservice teachers were not acting on their beliefs in historical inquiry or teaching history as interpretation.

Connecting to the findings of Wilson, et al. (1994) and Mayer (2006), van Hover and Yeager's (2004) study offers some understanding of the barriers that prevent beginning teachers from using historical inquiry. Through their investigation of three second-year teachers and the impact of classroom challenges on instructional practices, they found several factors, such as behavioral issues of students, coverage of expansive curriculum, and doubt in the students' ability to think critically about history appeared to override pedagogical and content strategies learned in their history methods courses. This is closely aligned with the arguments of Barton and Levstik (2004), who suggest that the

coverage of required content and classroom control are two major factors that prevent most beginning teachers from using historical inquiry.

### **Methodology**

This longitudinal qualitative study employed a multiple-case design (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). The participants were chosen through purposeful sampling of the 30 preservice teachers enrolled in City University's (CU)<sup>2</sup> secondary history and social studies methods course, which was taken concurrently for most preservice teachers with their student teaching practicum. CU is a large private urban university, located in the northeast United States. Of the 30 preservice teachers, 20 were student teaching during that semester. Of those 20 preservice teachers, 12 volunteered to be in the study during their teacher preparation.

During their student teaching, 10 of the 12 participants in this study expressed to me a preference for instructional methods I classify as constructivist-oriented in nature. When asked what techniques or methods worked best, their answers included that students need to get up out of their seats, work with others, and participate in simulations, debates, and "hands-on" work or interpretations of historical documents. Sometimes these techniques would be connected to direct instruction, but these teachers expressed that the direct instruction was to prepare students for another part of the lesson and that questioning and interaction during lectures was a crucial component. However, two of the participants expressed a strong preference for instructional methods that I would classify as transmission-oriented. They described using direct instruction and reading assignments with questions as their main instructional techniques, and in my observations of their

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<sup>2</sup> All names of participants, schools, and cities/towns are pseudonyms.



classroom, they used predominately teacher-centered methods. As such, these two preservice teachers were dropped from the study.

Due to poor economic conditions and an incredibly difficult job market, only five of the ten teachers attained history teacher positions, and one of those teachers chose to leave the study. This created conditions similar to what Patton (2002) labels a theory-based sampling where, “the researcher samples ... people on the basis of their potential manifestation or representation of important theoretical constructs” (p. 238), with the theoretical construct being constructivist theories of teaching and learning. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the four participants in this study.

**Table 1. Participants**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Race, Age (in January 2009), Gender, and Background</b>	<b>Student Teaching Location</b>	<b>First-Year Teaching Location</b>
Harrison	Asian male, 24. Born in Canada, lived in Hong Kong from ages 5-15. Attended a prestigious boarding school. Earned a BA in international relations and an MAT.	Woodtown High, an affluent suburban high school of 1,800 students. Taught world history and East Asian studies.	Smallborough High, an upper middle class suburban high school of 800. Taught modern world history.
Kim	White female, 23. From a middle class family from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Earned a BA in history and MAT.	Woodtown High, an affluent suburban high school of 1,800 students. Taught U.S. history.	Sherwood-Havenly High, an affluent suburban high school of 600. Taught world and U.S. history.
Mike	White male, 22. From a middle class family from Providence, Rhode Island. Earned a BA in history and teacher certification.	Midway High, a working class urban/suburban high school of 1,300 students. Taught U.S. history.	Beachmont High, a middle class suburban high school of 1,000 students. Taught U.S. history and interdisciplinary world history and world literature course.
Stacy	White female, 27. From a middle class family from New Hampshire. Earned a BA and PhD in sociology and an MAT.	Woodtown High, an affluent suburban high school of 1,800 students. Taught U.S. history.	Cottagehill High, an affluent suburban high school of 1,200. Taught modern world and U.S. history.

The data for this study were collected in three phases over 16 months. Phase 1 took place over the participants' student teaching practicum and social studies methods course. Phase 2 took place over the summer before the participants first year in the classroom. Phase 3 took place over the participants first year in the classroom. During Phase 1, each teacher had two interviews and two observations. During Phase 2, there was one interview. During Phase 3, there were three interviews and two observations. During all observations all classroom artifacts were collected.

I interviewed each participant six times: near the beginning and end of her or his student teaching practicum, in the summer before her or his first year, and in September or October, January/February, and May/June of her or his first year using uniform interview protocols, digital recording, and transcription. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was always face-to-face. As part of the larger longitudinal study, these interviews inquired about the beliefs and practices of the teachers. This study specifically examined the data related to their views about teaching history as interpretation and using historical inquiry in their classrooms. The interview protocol for the larger study, and the questions from which this data is drawn, is located in Appendix A.

I also observed each participant's classroom four times: at the beginning and end of her or his student teaching practicum, and in September or October, and January or February of her or his first year teaching. Each observation ranged from 50-90 minutes in duration. These observations allowed me to witness first-hand the pedagogical and content choices of these teachers, and gain a better understanding of their experience. My observation field notes of the participants' teaching tracked classroom activity and

interactions between the teachers and students. I took extensive field notes using a uniform observation field note protocol (see Appendix B), and collected all classroom artifacts (classroom handouts, homework assignments, PowerPoint presentations during lectures, etc.).

My data analysis followed what Miles and Huberman (1994) called an iterative process, where, “we are cerebral detectives, ferreting out answers to our research questions... That leads us to new samples of information, new documents. At each step along the evidence trail, we are making sample decisions to clarify the main patterns, see contrasts, identify exceptions or discrepant instances, and uncover negative instances” (p. 29). Throughout the study, I used memoing to track any patterns or themes that I found in the data, as well as any early conceptualizations I had related to the research questions.

After the data were transcribed and organized, my analysis comprised of four stages: reading across the data and generating assertions, coding the data, analysis of the individual cases, and finally a cross-case analysis. In the first stage of my analysis, I took three passes through raw data. This involved three thorough readings through all of my interview and observation transcripts, field notes, and site documents, while taking extensive notes through each reading. First, I read the data case by case chronologically, reading all of the data sources from one participant in order of occurrence. Next, I read the data across the data sources, reading all of the same sources across the participants. After a rough coding of the data, I then examined the data by three broad themes pertinent to my research questions: history as interpretation, historical inquiry, and instructional methods.

After reading across the data, I used the work of Erickson (1986) for guidance in the generation of assertions and then preliminary testing of those assertions. Before coding, I searched through the data corpus reviewing all of my interview and observation transcripts, field notes, site documents, and teacher reflections. It also involved breaking down the assertions into subassertions. I then began looking for key linkages among the data that were of central significance to the assertions, what Erickson called *generalizations* within the case at hand (as opposed to across cases). Erickson explained that the strongest assertions are the ones that have the most strings (i.e., linkages).

In the second stage of my analysis, I moved to coding. Using the work of Miles and Huberman (1994) for guidance, I coded each data source, creating labels for assigning meanings to the data compiled during the study. I used an iterative coding process, where my codes remained flexible, working through cycles of induction and deduction to power the analysis (p. 61). My first step was to create a preliminary coding scheme based on my research questions and theoretical framework and the coding schemes of published constructivist studies on learning to teach. I used a qualitative software program to organize my data and manage my coding. As I coded my first case and then subsequent cases, I continued to reevaluate and revise my codes. Once all cases had been coded once, I went back through all of the data reexamining my list of codes and determining if certain codes could be modified, combined, or eliminated. I then returned to my assertions. I revised and dropped assertions that did not have evidentiary warrant.

In the third stage of my analysis, I employed case analysis. Using the work of Yin (2009) for guidance, I focused on the analysis of the individual cases. For each individual

case, I carefully reviewed the coded data including interview and observation transcripts, field notes, site documents, and teacher reflections. I began a process of thematic analysis, looking for major themes across the data within a single case. However, this process was also recursive; as I developed themes, I again reexamined my codes.

In the fourth stage of my data analysis, I employed cross-case analysis on the quintain, or the whole of the cases, following the procedures outlined by Stake (2006). The process began with a search for “assertions” but this time across the quintain. These assertions were based in direct evidence from the individual cases in the quintain. The next step was another careful rereading of the data in the case files leading to the creation of cross-case themes that relate to the research questions being investigated and the theoretical perspective of constructivist theories of teaching and learning. Using Stake’s (2006) Track 1, I revisited the result of my thematic analysis from the individual case findings. I took the evidence from each case finding and placed them on cards. I then sorted these case findings base on my assessment of their importance (high, middle, low importance) in relation to each theme (which connected to my research questions and theoretical perspective). This helped me visualize the multicase project as a whole. I then looked at the case findings and determined which findings feed into which themes, and located any case findings that were atypical to the quintain.

### **Findings**

From the analysis, there were several key findings. First, the teachers’ views of history as interpretation were strongly influenced by their content backgrounds and the school contexts where they taught. Second, classroom control and a limited

understanding of history content were major barriers preventing teachers from teaching history as interpretation more often. Third, the teachers believed the better development of their own practical “toolkit” to engage their students in historical interpretation would have helped them overcome these barriers.

### **Teaching History As Interpretation**

The teachers’ views of history as interpretation were strongly influenced by their content backgrounds and the two teachers with history degrees were more successful implementing historical inquiry. Kim and Mike, the two history majors, defined historical inquiry most closely to the definition used by Barton and Levstik (2004). Mike defined historical inquiry as,

For the students to explain how they arrive at the thesis or the conclusion they arrived at. They can do that through evidence, so I think you can have differing theses or end game conclusions, if you have different students using evidence then you can interpret it in different ways. (Interview 3, August 31, 2009)

Kim defined historical inquiry as “the practice of doing history. And what I mean by that is going through the sources both primary and secondary, sorting them, categorizing them into good, bad, useful, not useful” (Interview 3, August 28, 2009). Kim said she did this with her students by having them back up arguments with evidence. She said,

I would want them to pick a number of perspectives. I would provide them with a number of documents and have them analyze different perspectives, on an issue. (Interview 3, August 28, 2009)

To both Mike and Kim, historical inquiry was answering historical questions or theses using evidence. Both teachers also believed that the purpose of these activities were to help students see different perspectives of historical events. Mike's definition also involved having students find their own perspective of the past in the modern day.

School context also had an important influence on teachers' views of history as inquiry. Stacy's definitions of historical inquiry also shared some similarity to Mike and Kim, but her definition initially lacked a connection between answering historical questions with historical evidence. After student teaching, Stacy initially defined historical inquiry as "asking questions about history and again there's probably a series of schools of thought among historians of how you do that" (Interview 3, August 26, 2009). She discussed historical inquiry in terms of how historians use it, but not necessarily how her students should use it. However, later in her first year she defined it as "present[ing] questions where [the students] can make meaning out of events and the world and then use the information ... as the evidence to support whatever meaning that they arrive at, at the end" (Interview 5, February 18, 2010). She said of this new focus on evidence,

I think that's actually something that kind of is department-wide. Is that they really need to work on developing their writing as analytical writers. ... You make an argument, you find evidence to support your argument, you analyze your evidence, in order to prove how it fits your argument. (Interview 5, February 18, 2010).

Stacy's colleagues emphasized the importance of using evidence to support historical arguments and she embraced this idea. During her first year, she also embraced the idea that her students should be making judgments and debating the past in the present. This

example highlighted the importance of colleagues in supporting and encouraging beginning teachers' use of historical inquiry.

Unlike the other participants, Harrison's definition of historical inquiry was somewhat convoluted. He said it was,

investigating history, doing research trying to understand it, making interpretations, and make arguments about it. ... I think it's encompassed within that, when I say inquiry, it involves investigating evidence, so investigating facts. I might get them to memorize some terms and that's part of it ... I think in that sense it's a hundred percent [of my teaching]. (Interview 3, August 26, 2009)

His combination of answering historical questions with evidence is aligned with the other three teachers' definitions, but he makes it a point to include the idea that the evidence he wants his students to use is specifically the facts he teaches them in class. In this sense, Harrison is not truly engaging his students in interpretation; rather he is having them develop logical thinking, which is different from how Kim, Mike, and Stacy defined historical inquiry as answering questions using evidence from historical sources. Yet, Harrison did still have argument and debate included in his definition.

Throughout the study, I observed Kim, Mike, and Stacy teach multiple lessons that had historical inquiry as the goal, where students were asked historical questions, gathered and evaluated relevant evidence, and reached conclusions based on that evidence. This paralleled the teachers' own descriptions of their practice and their teaching for historical thinking. However, all three teachers said they used historical inquiry less frequently than they would have liked. In contrast, Harrison infrequently



used historical inquiry during his student teaching and he shifted even more toward direct instruction and teacher-centered activities during his first year.

Kim used historical inquiry in three out of my four observations. In the first observation she had her students examine the question: How did Chinese schooling differ from schooling today and which schooling is better? To answer this, Kim had students use several primary source documents. In the third observation, Kim used excerpts from the Koran to have students answer the question: Is Islam historically the same as what is portrayed in the media today? In the fourth observation, Kim used two different writings from the Black Plague as to how people should react. She asked: How would you have reacted to the Plague? Kim often connected the past and the present showing an important part of teaching history as interpretation, specifically the idea of understanding how past views of events may be different than views today.

During her student teaching Kim discussed an example of teaching historical inquiry,

I had [the students] reading primary resources to get a sense of the emotional context of the time. I had them read the story of William, Saint William of Norwich, whose a little boy murdered in England, which is the root of anti-Semitism in England, to talk about how life in towns is affected by people's prejudices and stuff like that ... [then I had] them break into small groups and analyze the primary resources. (Interview 2, April 3, 2009)

In this class she asked the students to answer: Was it justifiable to blame this murder on the Jews in England? For Kim, she routinely asked historical questions and asked

students to use historical evidence to answer them. She felt making history controversial was essential to teaching history well.

Mike used historical inquiry in two of the four classes I observed, but neither used primary sources as the available evidence. In the first observation, he had students answer the question: How should the government have dealt with the economic problems of the Depression? This lesson from *History Alive!* had students ask questions using evidence from secondary sources describing the conditions of the Depression. During his first year, Mike had students represent different countries at the Treaty of Versailles. Here he had students consider the question: How should Europe be divided to prevent future wars? Again, this lesson was not rooted in primary source evidence.

Mike explained that several contextual factors during student teaching made it difficult to use historical inquiry more frequently in his classroom. He said, “I didn’t really have the students too much delve into comparing and contrasting primary documents from the same period, just used [primary sources] to get a point across in a time period” (Interview 3, August 31, 2009). This improved once he entered his own classroom. Speaking before the start of the school year, he said, “I think if I established it (historical inquiry) from the beginning of the year. The importance of looking at being skeptical about what you read and understanding that different documents can tell different, paint a different picture of what happened” (Interview 3, August 31, 2009). In his first year, Mike made it a point to have his students interpret history.

Stacy used historical inquiry in two of the four classes I observed, although she described using it infrequently during student teaching and more frequently during her

first year. Stacy described a lesson during her first year that was perhaps a more solid example of historical inquiry,

So one thing we did recently, I gave the censored version of the Spanish American War, like your standard history textbook-type explanation ... and then we looked at other documents that would have called that into question ... looking at other writings by people who opposed the annexation of the Philippines and say if this really was what the Spanish American War was really about. Why is this person writing this? So using primary sources either to enhance something we have learned or to throw something into question. (Interview 2, April 22, 2009)

In this particular lesson, Stacy's teaching included use of historical inquiry and comparing multiple perspectives of the past. She asked a historical question: What perspective of the Spanish American War do you agree with most? She had students source and corroborate primary source documents and a modern day textbook, trying to make historical sense of all of them. I also observed her teach a class with a mock trial that used primary source documents from the Pullman Strikes as the evidence for the case. This put students in a situation where they had to consider multiple perspectives of the documents, but also think about them in the historical context. She discussed another example of historical inquiry from her student teaching,

I've done a little bit of that, again just speaking from frame of reference, so in this unit on western expansion, we look at how Native Americans got onto reservations and after Custer's Last Stand, Sitting Bull chooses not to go to reservations, but to flee to Canada. So would you make that same decision and

why do you think it was right? Sort of ask questions about whether or not his decision to fight American troops was a just war or not. The students do a short reading on what a just war is and ask that, so in that sense it's questioning historical actors. (Interview 3, August 26, 2009)

Here, Stacy did the first step of historical inquiry, asking historical questions, but unlike the first example, this lesson was short on having students use historical evidence to answer those questions.

Harrison used historical inquiry in none of the four classes I observed and he described rarely using it in his classroom. Early on, Harrison described one group activity involving comparing three different views of appeasement before World War II using a document-based question, but he said he generally did not use historical inquiry, because most students do not understand the assignment and struggle. He said,

Some students maybe don't completely understand the directions I give or the readings. Like I, on Wednesday, handed out a document-based question with three different paragraphs, primary sources on people talking about appeasement, back in 1938. I think one was a Churchill excerpt, one was another person in Britain, [the] third one I think was Chamberlain. Some of the kids just didn't get it at all. ... I feel though for the [lower level] students, more of the lecture, question and answer format, like I did today, is more valuable for them. (Interview 1, March 19, 2009)

Although Harrison described the desire to try historical inquiry again, because he believed it to be a good activity, he also began to think that lower-level students benefited more from lecture and questioning. He believed that inquiry should be a more generic

skill. He also said history should focus on skills and “scaffolding questions to make it basically easier for students to get to that critical thinking, so start with easier questions on their knowledge and comprehension scale of Blooms Taxonomy” (Interview 5, February 10, 2010). Harrison saw inquiry as a generic skill that is part of the higher order thinking skills he strived to develop in students. Unlike the other three participants, in my observations Harrison would usually ask questions that were rooted in the present instead of the past. As we will see in the following sections, much of Harrison’s struggles with teaching history as interpretation came from his struggles with classroom control and the isolated context of his first year in the classroom.

### **Content and Control**

Classroom control and understanding of history content were major barriers preventing teachers from using historical interpretation. When these issues were overcome, teachers were better able to teach history as interpretation. However, when teachers’ struggles persisted they used increased direct instruction to control students. These findings corroborate previous work in the area of constructivist and inquiry-based teaching and learning. It aligns with Brophy’s (2006) argument that constructivist learning

require[s] teachers to possess a great deal of subject-matter knowledge and related pedagogical knowledge that will allow them to respond quickly to only partially predictable developments in classroom discourse, and they require students to participate more actively and take more personal risks in learning. (p. 530)

Furthermore, it connects to the findings of McNeil (1988), where the main preoccupation of teachers across the schools she studied was controlling the way content was covered and controlling the behaviors of their students, which had a negative influence on teaching and learning.

An analysis across all four cases revealed that the beginning history teachers' struggles varied based on their understanding of history. Mike and Kim, both history majors, expressed considerable comfort with not only the facts of history, but also with primary sources and the process by which historians interpret the past. They believed that primary sources and historical interpretation were an important part of any history class. Whereas Stacy expressed a desire to do this, but had a lack of knowledge to implement it, and Harrison said he did not use primary sources very often, because he found them boring and not useful in his teaching. As a result of their view of history, Mike and Kim were better positioned to teach history as interpretation as beginning teachers.

Mike and Kim were able to use their knowledge of history to create more engaging activities, often involving primary sources. For example, Mike said of his knowledge of history and comfort with historiography, "that's definitely something that was stressed in [my university] history classes. Especially in the colloquia seminars, [where] I felt really prepared to know how to analyze history" (Interview 6, May 5, 2010). He described how he then incorporated this into his classroom during his first year. With his students he said he often took a primary source and created an activity around it where he asks students would figure out, "What does this mean? What does this say about the author? What does it say about his bias? I feel comfortable doing that myself, and I work on relaying that to students" (Interview 6, May 5, 2010).

This was also true for Kim, where she routinely built her lessons around her understanding of a historical period. One example of this came from a unit that she created during her student teaching, which used her knowledge about anti-Semitism in Medieval Europe. She specifically chose a complex document that had no easy interpretation and then asked her students to figure out what it meant, like detectives. She said,

I taught this lesson twice and I think it went well both times. I used this document, it was talking about life in medieval towns. In my undergrad history I did a lot of work with Nazi Germany and anti-Semitism. So of course you have to go way back to medieval England to look at the history of anti-Semitism in Europe and the expulsion of Jews ... [I used the] life and miracles of St. William of Norwich and it's a story ... where [Jews] get young boys and ritually murder them. ... It was very easy for me to talk about [and] I could answer all the questions that [students] had. The two times I've taught it I think it went pretty well. (Interview 2, March 3, 2009)

She described using this document to push the students to see multiple perspectives. In this case, one perspective from a possible Christian perspective which depicted the Jews as ruthless and the other from a possible Jewish perspective that saw this as fiction and a witch hunt to give the Christians more power to oppress, segregate, and drive out the Jewish population from England. This was a prime example of how not only Kim's knowledge of historical fact, but also her understanding of how history is created, could increase her comfort using inquiry-based and constructivist-oriented teaching techniques. Kim's statement that "I could answer all the questions that they had" is also telling,

because it reveals exactly what Brophy (2006) argued was the need in a constructivist-oriented classroom to respond quickly to only partially predictable developments in the classroom discourse.

There is an important distinction between knowledge of historical facts and genuine historical content knowledge in these cases. Harrison knew the facts of history. He was incredibly knowledgeable about what happened and he could tell the facts and stories of the past. I would speculate on standardized tests of history he might do as well, if not better than the other participants in this study. However, he did not have a highly developed disciplinary understanding of history, or what makes history unique as a discipline and the process by which historians interpret the past. This limited historical content knowledge was evident in Harrison's teaching, where it was more about exposing students to what happened (i.e., had them read diaries of Holocaust victims, watch a movie about living in a divided Korea), whereas when I observed Mike and Kim, much more of their lessons were dedicated to understanding the past in a deeper way. Mike and Kim routinely engaged their students in historical interpretation, where Harrison did not. They would also routinely cite their learning in history courses as helping them form these views.

When the beginning teachers were also unable to control the behaviors of students in their classroom, they would decrease opportunities for their students to be actively engaged in historical interpretation. A prime example can be seen from Stacy's troubles with her classroom management when she said, "I absolutely despised group work, because group work felt completely out of control," however after working on this issue, she declared, "Group work is now not an issue" (Interview 4, October 13, 2009). I



contend that Stacy was in a better position to overcome this barrier as a result of the school context during her first year teaching, which gave her independence, but also support from colleagues who shared similar views of teaching history.

However, Mike and Kim had far less issues with classroom control. This appeared related to their teaching contexts where they taught, but also their comfort with the historical subject matter they taught. Out of the four teachers, Mike expressed having the least struggles with classroom management. He said, “Controlling the class honestly is something I thought would be pretty difficult for me at first, but as I haven’t had many problems” (Interview 1, March 12, 2009). He later attributed this to his cooperating teacher’s setting of a tone in the first half of the year. This ability persisted into his first year in the classroom. Kim also faced relatively few classroom management problems. She stated, “I felt for a student teacher I had fairly good classroom management. I mean obviously there was much to be improved upon. . . . I have a good routine to go in and start my own routines [this year], right from day one” (Interview 3, August 28, 2009). This is not to say that Kim and Mike did not have any issues with classroom management, they were, after all, beginning teachers, but the issues they described to me in interviews and the few I witnessed during my observations were somewhat typical of student and first year teachers. Meanwhile, the issues that Stacy and Harrison faced were much more difficult, such as students being openly defiant and disrespectful to them.

### **Practical Tools**

The teachers believed that the better development of their own practical “toolkit” would have helped them overcome their barriers to engaging students in historical

interpretation. Three participants specifically referred to their need for a better teacher “tool kit” and all four of the teachers in this study expressed a desire to use more constructivist-oriented practices and teach history as interpretation, but were unable as a result of their limited teaching repertoires.

My understanding of the appropriation of tools for teaching is informed by the work of Grossman et al. (1999) in English education. Using activity theory and its focus on social and cultural factors that mediate teacher development, they argued that “a person’s frameworks for thinking are developed through problem-solving action carried out in specific settings whose social structures have been developed through historical, culturally grounded actions” (p. 4). As such, Grossman et al. argued there are certain pedagogical tools that teachers choose to inform their decisions and conduct their teaching. They organized these tools into two categories, conceptual and practical.

Conceptual tools are,

principles, frameworks, and ideas about teaching, learning, and [disciplinary] acquisition that teachers use as heuristics to guide decisions about teaching and learning. Conceptual tools can include broadly applicable theories, such as constructivism or reader-response theory and theoretical principles and concepts, such as instructional scaffolding, that can serve as guidelines for instructional practice across the different strands of the curriculum. (p. 14)

and practical tools were defined as,

classroom practices, strategies, and resources that do not serve as broad conceptions to guide an array of decisions but, instead, have more local and immediate utility. These include instructional practices, such as journal writing

and daily oral language exercises, and resources, such as textbooks or curriculum materials. (p. 14)

Moreover, they argued that although teachers may adopt the conceptual tools during their teacher preparation programs, they might lack the practical tools to teach in ways aligned with their conceptualization of teaching and that teachers might use practical tools, without the conceptual understanding behind these tools. Grossman, et al. referred to an important part of this development as the appropriation or “process through which a person adopts the pedagogical tools available for use in particular social environments (e.g., schools, preservice programs) and through this process internalizes ways of thinking endemic to specific cultural practices (e.g., using phonics to teach reading)” (p. 15). The social environment, whether it be the teacher preparation program or the school context where they teach, has an important influence on teachers’ use of these conceptual tools. At the same time, recommendations from more experienced members, such as school-based teachers or university faculty may have a large amount of influence on how teachers use these conceptual tools to guide their practice. In this study, the teachers embraced the conceptual tool of constructivist theories of teaching and learning, but having conceptual tools without linked practical tools made it difficult for the teachers to teach in ways aligned with their beliefs.

The analysis across the four cases in this study showed that City University School of Education’s (CUSE) teacher preparation program provided the participants with a limited development of practical tools. Although their teacher preparation program exposed them to many different types of instructional techniques and their methods course included the teaching of a model lesson to the class, the beginning teachers in this

study desired more tangible resources (practical tools) as they entered their first year. It seemed to be not enough to teach the participants how to make a lesson/unit plans, and discuss different lesson ideas. Instead, they required actual lesson and unit plans to carry with them into the first year to help support their constructivist-oriented instruction.

The need for more developed practical tools was a common theme that emerged during the teachers' first year across all of the cases. Stacy said, "I need like a list as a new teacher of like here are different methods you can do" (Interview 5, February 18, 2010). She added,

This could be one thing, let's generate a list of all the different things you could do in a classroom. Because what ends up happening is you've got your own personal tool kit and you forget that there are other tools out there to use. ... I mean I can't invent all these methods, right? (Interview 5, February 18, 2010)

Kim expressed a very similar idea when I asked her about engaging students in a way that was aligned with teaching history as interpretation and her constructivist-oriented beliefs.

She said,

I think that's something that I find myself struggling with the most. I think I don't necessarily have the tools in my bag to do that yet and I find that very upsetting frankly, because that's something I know I should be doing and I'm not. I think it seems to me that you just sort of pick things up [like that] over time. ... Just to try and figure out what other things I can do other than lecture and give them a document. (Interview 5, February 25, 2010)

When I asked her about her teacher preparation, she said,

I also think it would have been nice to spend more time on concrete stuff like what can I do that is this, what can I do that is that. Different activities, different ways of presenting stuff, because I feel like that's where I really struggle. I'm not a particularly creative person frankly and I just can't come up with ideas. ... I feel really disappointed in myself that I can't think of stuff that's more creative, so I go to the Internet and that's very helpful because you know everything on God's green earth is there in terms of lesson plans, but at the end of the day I'm like, well, I did that yesterday and that day before. (Interview 5, February 25, 2010)

Having more developed practical tools going into her first classroom might have been particularly useful in Kim's case, where her department head and many colleagues were transmission-oriented in their practices and had few constructivist-oriented practical tools to show her. Where she had limited lesson and unit plans from her teacher preparation, she desperately went to the Internet to fill the gap. However, if she had a decent number of useable lesson and unit plans, she might have had a running start to build upon.

Although Mike was the only participant that did not use the term tool kit, he discussed his desire for specific lessons he could use as a beginning teacher and linked this to his reliance on supplies he found in his classroom and *History Alive!* lesson plans that were available to him. He said,

Yeah, I definitely think I could use more material. It's just tough coming in cold. ... So I've used just a combination of the books that were just in my room when I moved in ... a combination of that [and] *History Alive!* (Interview 4, October 22, 2009)

Mike and Kim's experience are aligned with what Grossman, et al. (2000) argued happens when teacher education programs do not help beginning teachers develop practical tools; they ultimately latch onto practical tools they find elsewhere, eagerly seeking materials and methods from other sources. This can be seen in Mike's overwhelming use of *History Alive!* and Kim's scouring of the Internet for lesson plans.

### **Implications**

The participants in this study shed light on the barriers beginning history teachers face, but also what can help support them, in learning to teach history as interpretation. Looking across the data, I make three contentions about the beginning teachers in this study. First, it is important to understand how content background plays a role in teaching history as interpretation. Second, understanding how to better develop teachers' classroom management will increase their ability to teach history as interpretation. Third, beginning teachers benefit from more development of their practical tools for teaching.

Teacher preparation programs should find better ways to help beginning teachers' struggles with content-related issues. The teachers in this study, as well as previous research, highlight the predicament new teachers are put in when their historical content knowledge is weak. The results of this study are aligned with the arguments of Richardson (2003) and Brophy (2006) that a depth of subject matter knowledge is necessary to teach in constructivist ways. Although in this study the two history majors did show signs that their content preparation was sufficient, other research has shown college- and university-based history courses might be inadequate at developing the types of historical content knowledge prospective history teachers need.

Social studies teacher education programs should consider ways to reform the way subject matter is traditionally taught to teachers, so that beginning teachers have more experiences learning history through inquiry, as multiple competing perspectives, and about the content they will be teaching. Although I see great value in studying the social sciences and I am not making the argument that teachers with degrees in psychology or political science are not qualified to teach the discipline of history, from this study it was clear that without a strong background in history (which is the dominant discipline in social studies today), the teachers struggled. Yet, adding more history coursework does not guarantee that beginning history teachers will not have these struggles. There are certainly many teachers with undergraduate degrees in history that lack a disciplinary understanding of history. Rather, teacher preparation programs must balance all these concerns in the design of their history/social studies education programs. At a minimum, education faculty members should advise future history teachers to take courses in the history department that teach historical inquiry or emphasize multiple competing perspectives.

Some reforms can be made to teacher education programs to help increase the historical understanding of teachers. Of course, some are more complicated to institute than others. Ideally, teacher preparation programs would create collaborative efforts with university history departments, building on each school's area of expertise in a strong partnership. However, this recommendation has now been made for decades (see Bradley Commission, 1989), but the lack of any real traction has been rooted in the generally low status of schools of education within academia. Arguments labeling schools of education as in part or wholly responsible for the underdevelopment of history teachers' content

knowledge are not uncommon (Nash, 2008; Ravitch, 2000; Ravitch & Finn, 1987; Shedd, 2000). With these arguments, history departments are often left off the hook for their own negligence in preparing prospective history teachers' abilities to understand history in a disciplinary sense.

A more pragmatic solution is to get schools of education to work with university history departments to create tracks for prospective teachers that offer the most appropriate courses for teaching history as interpretation. If educators can influence these departments to see that they do not only educate the future professors and researchers of history, but also most of the future K-12 history teachers, substantial reform is more likely.

Teacher preparation programs should find better ways to help beginning teachers' struggles with classroom control. Although the teachers believed much of their development of classroom management came from their experiences teaching in the classroom, they desired a greater education on classroom management in their teacher preparation program. When the teachers found few solutions from their cooperating teacher in the case of Stacy or their teacher preparation courses in the case of Harrison, they sought help in the form of books on classroom management. I speculate this was a sign that these teachers were grasping for more help in how to manage a classroom. At minimum, more instruction in classroom management might decrease some of the anxiety, since classroom management is often seen as a major fear for beginning teachers.

Although it is unfair to expect teacher preparation programs to eradicate issues of classroom management, these programs can do more to help beginning teachers develop



their classroom management practices. The teachers in this study showed that having only a few class meetings on classroom management did not give them a strong enough ability to manage the classroom, especially when that classroom including student-centered activities where the teacher relinquishes some of her or his classroom control. A better alternative could include an integration of learning classroom management techniques with a pre-practicum experience to try these techniques out. Another possible solution is the integration of classroom management into more of the coursework found in teacher preparation programs, and in particular how to manage a classroom that uses constructivist-oriented methods, including student-centered learning activities.

Teacher development is a complex process that takes place over a career span. As such, teacher induction programs must also be places that support beginning teachers with constructivist beliefs as they transition into the classroom. In her review of research on induction programs, Huling-Austin (1992) found that beginning teachers needed strong collegial support, especially by mentors who understood learning theory. Purposeful selection of mentors as part of induction programs may increase the success of beginning teachers with constructivist beliefs. Some of the previous research presented in this study showed that an alignment in beliefs between cooperating and student teachers increased the ability of student teachers to use constructivist-oriented practices. Furthermore, as the participants in this study show, teaching in contexts that are aligned with one's constructivist beliefs helped foster constructivist-oriented practices, especially if there is support from colleagues. Through a purposeful selection of supportive mentors who see history as interpreted and inquiry-based, beginning teachers may find an ally to help them develop desired constructivist-oriented practices. This would offer needed

support as beginning teachers struggle with issues of content or control. Mentor teachers could offer help through conversations, observations with feedback, and problem solving.

Finally, preservice and inservice teacher education programs should focus more on helping prospective teachers develop practical tools for teaching. This study corroborated the work of Grossman et al. (1999) that found that although teachers may adopt the conceptual tools in their teacher preparation programs, they often lack practical tools to teach in ways aligned with their conceptualization of teaching. Programs should consider this when planning the sequences of their coursework and teacher educators should be aware of this when planning their courses. From the experience of these four teachers, it became evident that the teachers developed conceptual tools during their teacher preparation, but did not experience the level of development related to practical tools to find success in the classroom using constructivist-oriented methods. Although the teachers found some practical tools in their two methods courses, this only represented a small part of their teacher preparation courses.

Using the analogy that “if you give people fish, they can eat for a day, but if you teach them to fish, they can eat for a lifetime,” Chin (1997) argued that teacher educators,

cannot engage fully in teaching pre-service teachers how to fish if they are preoccupied with the hunger pangs in their empty stomachs. Thus I see my own role as one in which I am endeavoring to teach people to fish, but also trying to give them enough fish so that in the interim they do not go hungry. (p. 121)

Perhaps the teachers in this study needed a few more “fish” or what they described as a more tools in their teacher toolkits to be successful using instructional methods aligned with their beliefs. It was not enough to teach them how to make a lesson and unit plan

and give them and lesson ideas; they required example methods and lessons they could take with them into the classroom. Of course, developing these practical tools during teacher preparation is only the first step. As Loughran and Russell (1997) argued, teacher education can only be the starting point for the development of constructivist-oriented teaching, since no teacher preparation program could fully “equip” a teacher with all the skills and understandings necessary to teach. The City University program helped these teachers challenge the perspectives of how students learn and develop conceptual tools that would guide their future teaching, but with limited practical tools the teachers struggled to implement practices aligned with their beliefs as they transitioned into the classroom.

### **Significance**

By examining over time how the beliefs and practices of beginning teachers related to historical interpretation, some of the benefits and shortfalls of their teacher preparation were revealed. In this study the teachers showed a continued desire to engage students in historical interpretation, but expressed that control and content were major barriers to its use in their classrooms. However, the teachers’ principal concern was a lack of a more developed “toolkit” or a repertoire to engage students in historical interpretation, which might have given them greater confidence in engaging students in historical interpretation. This study in conjunction with other recent research on teachers engaging students in historical interpretation (cf. Bain, 2006; Barton, McCully, & Marks, 2004; Grant, 2001; Monte-Sano, 2008) can inform the design of our history teacher preparation programs that will encourage these types of teaching.

Barton and Levstik (2003, 2004) make convincing arguments that getting more teachers to engage their students in historical interpretation is ultimately good not only for historical understanding, but also for the wider goal of democratic education, because engaging students in historical interpretation helps students take part in the key activities necessary for participation in a democratic society. Of course, there is no guarantee that this type of activity will make students better citizens, but finding ways to get beginning teachers to integrate this into their practice is a step in the right direction toward getting their students to see multiple perspectives and evaluate those perspectives against evidence.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Interview 1 Protocol (Student Teacher – Beginning)**

#### **I. Background**

1. Why do you want to be a teacher? Why a history teacher?
2. Tell me a little about your background.

Probe: Where did you grow up? What types of schooling did you experience? Why did you choose CU?

3. How long have you been student teaching so far?

#### **II. Teaching History/Beliefs About Learning**

4. Since you started student teaching, what was your greatest success? Why was it your greatest success?
5. Since you started student teaching, what was something that did not go well? Why didn't it go well? How would you change it for the future?
6. How do students learn best? What teaching methods do you use most? Are there any methods you wished you could use more?

#### **III. Teacher Preparation**

7. So far, what has been the most important thing you have learned from your methods course or teacher preparation courses? What has been least helpful?

Probe: What would you suggest be done differently in your teacher preparation program?

8. So far, what has been the most important thing you have learned from your history or social science courses content courses? What has been least helpful?
9. Is there anything you would like to add about your teacher preparation experience to help me better understand it?

**Interview 2 Protocol**  
(Student Teacher - End)

**I. Teaching History/Beliefs About Learning**

1. How long have you been student teaching for?
2. Thinking about your recent experiences (student teaching and teacher preparation), can you think of any beliefs you had about teaching that have changed?
3. How do students learn best? What teaching methods do you think work best? What teaching methods have you used the most?

Probe: Are there any that don't work with your students? Do you think those methods may work with other students?

4. Since you started student teaching, what has been your best lesson? Why was it your best lesson?
5. Since you started student teaching, what has been a lesson that did not go so well? Why did it not go well? How would you change it in the future (or will you not use it again)?
6. How have you assessed student learning during your student teaching? (Any ways other than tests? Have you used rubrics?) Have you changed your view of assessments from your first weeks of student teaching? How have your assessments changed?
7. Have you incorporate primary sources in your classroom? If so, how? Have you used the textbook with your students? If so, how?
8. Have you used current events in your classroom? If so, can you give me an example? Has anything controversial come up in class? If so, how did you respond? How would you handle a controversial issue? How do you handle students wanting to know your political views?

**II. Views of History**

9. History is interpreted through many different perspectives; do you generally agree more with a particular view of history? Are there historians you tend to agree with more?

Probe: Was there a professor you agreed with more? Is there a reason you agree more with that view? Has this view changed?

10. Do you incorporate different views of the past in your lessons? If so, how have you done this? Give an example.
11. Have you gained any knowledge of history content from teaching it? If so, can you give an example? Have you changed any views of certain events or historical figures? Have you taught any topics you have not taken or have not taken since K-12?

**Interview 3 Protocol**  
(Summer Before First Year)

**I. Background**

1. Why did you take the job at this school? Was it your first choice?
2. When you imagine yourself teaching relatively soon from now, what do you see? What will your classroom be like? What are your hopes? What will be the biggest challenges?
3. Do you think about teaching as a career? What do you see yourself doing in the next five years? Ten years?
4. Some people have said they learned more about teaching history from their student teaching, than they did from their methods courses. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

**II. Philosophy/Beliefs About Learning**

I am now going to talk about some different views of teaching and learning. I will be making some statements and I want to know your reaction to them. Do you agree or disagree or do you think you are somewhere in the middle?

5. Some people have said teachers transfer their knowledge to their students. What is your reaction? Why? What influenced your opinion? If she or he agrees: How does this look in your classroom?

Probe: Do you think there is a set knowledge everyone should know? Certain books or certain things about the past? Is there one narrative or one way of looking at history? Some people have stated that history is the “story about what happened.” Do you agree with this?

6. Some people have said students create their knowledge and meaning from experiences. What is your reaction? Why? What influenced your opinion? If she or he agrees: How does this look in your classroom?
7. Some people have said students create their knowledge from social interactions. What is your reaction? Why? What influenced your opinion? If she or he agrees: How does this look in your classroom?
8. Some people have said students should explore their own position in a society, and the existence of inequality and privilege in that society. What is your reaction? Why? What influenced your opinion? If she or he agrees: How does this look in your classroom?
9. Out of all of these different philosophies, which one is most aligned with your views of teaching?

If necessary remind them: Teaching and learning as: transferring knowledge from teacher to student, creates knowledge through student’s experiences, social interaction is required to created knowledge, or getting students to examine their role in society.

### **III. Teaching History**

10. How would you define historical inquiry? Have you used activities that involve historical inquiry during your student teaching? If so, how much of your student teaching would you say was inquiry-based? Could you describe some activities that you used that were inquiry-based?

Probe: Is this something that is best taught/learned individually or through social interaction?

11. Some people have said that history teachers should teach students to think like historians about the past (Refer to the assigned readings by Sam Wineburg from their methods course). Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why? What influenced your opinion?

**Interview 4 Protocol**  
(First Year Classroom Teacher - Beginning)

**I. Background**

1. How has your teaching experience at this school been so far? What are the positive aspects of your current school? What are the negative aspects? Does your department have a particular view of content? If so, could you describe it. Do you agree or disagree with their view? Does your department have a particular view of pedagogy? If so, could you describe it. Do you agree or disagree with their view?

2. Last year, during student teaching, you were struggling with (issue related to specific teacher: Stacy and Harrison: classroom management and doing group work or other activities; Mike: planning and finding materials and resources; Kim: helping the students see events within a historical context). How's it going now? Why do you think it is (the same, better, worse)?

Probe: Ask Mike and Kim: How is your classroom management compared to student teaching? Did you have any struggles with classroom management during student teaching?

3. Are the members of your department at your school supportive? Can you give some examples of their support?

**II. Pedagogy**

4. What teaching methods do you think work best with your students? Why?

5. What teaching methods have you used most often? Why?

6. What teaching methods do you think do not work well with your students? Why? Are there any methods you will not use?

**III. Philosophy/Beliefs About Learning**

7. Have you heard of the educational term constructivism or constructivist?

If yes: How would you define it? What does it mean to you? Where do you think you have learned about it? Do you consider yourself a constructivist? If yes, when do you think you developed this view—what influenced this? If not, did you ever?

If no: Were you ever taught at CU about different educational theories or different views of education and how was that organized? Do you tend to agree with one theory or philosophy of education? If so, can you describe it to me?

**III. Teaching History**

8. Why teach history? What is the purpose(s) of teaching history? Why should students learn history?

9. Did your university coursework change to your view of teaching history? If so, how? Did your student teaching change your view of teaching history? If so, how?

10. You had mentioned in a previous interview that seeing perspectives in history as very important, how did you develop that belief or what influenced that belief?

Probe: During student teaching, did your cooperating teacher emphasize perspectives in history? (If not, did she or he ever do anything that encouraged students to see events from different perspectives?)

Probe: Did your methods professor emphasize perspectives in history? (If not, did she or he ever do anything that encouraged you to get your students to see events from different perspectives?) What were the main themes or ideas that your methods professor emphasized in your methods course?

11. Is there anything you would like to add about your teaching experience to help me better understand it?



**Interview 5 Protocol**  
(First Year Classroom Teachers – Middle)

**I. Current School**

1. Last time we talked, I asked you about the positive and negative aspects of your school, you mentioned

List items specific to this teacher (Kim: Authoritarian department head vs. autonomy/fear to speak out and pressure to lecture more. Mike: Major overhaul of school curriculum and getting more students to participate. Harrison: Design more engaging activities and continue to develop strategies for lower-level class. Stacy: Limited historical content knowledge). Have these changed at all?

2. Have you faced any struggles with covering the curriculum content at your school?

Probe: Have you felt any pressure to cover the state curriculum from your department or school? Are there any areas of content you have felt unprepared to teach?

3. Has your classroom management changed compared to the first months of the school year? Has it improved, regressed, or stayed relatively similar?

**II. Philosophy/Beliefs About Learning**

4. You had mentioned that you believed that students' construct their knowledge and meaning from experiences. Now that you have been teaching for a half-year, have those beliefs changed at all? If so, how?

Probe: (If they are changing) Why do you think they are changing? (If they are not changing) Why do you think this belief stays consistent?

5. You had mentioned that you believed that students' construct their knowledge through social interactions with others. Now that you have been teaching for a half-year, have those beliefs changed at all? If so, how?

Probe: (If they are changing) Why do you think they are changing? (If they are not changing) Why do you think this belief stays consistent?

6. Has anything at your current school reduced or hindered your ability to use constructivist-oriented teaching methods? Has anything at your current school increased or encouraged your ability to use constructivist-oriented teaching methods? Are you more likely or less likely to use constructivist-oriented teaching methods with lower level students?

7. Can lecturing be compatible with constructivist teaching or a view that students construct their knowledge?

Probe: (If so) How can it be compatible. Are there ways it is not compatible? (If not) Why not?

### **III. Teaching History**

8. Does your department or individual members of your department, have a particular view of history (conservative, progressive/revisionist etc.)? Do your views align with your department?

9. Do you incorporate primary sources in your classroom? If so, how do you employ them?

Probe: Are they using them as text to be remembered or as part of an inquiry project?

10. Have you used the textbook with your students? If so, how do you use it (in class? homework? Source or references? etc.)?

Probe: Why are you using it? Are you relying on them more than you would like?

11. I had asked in a past interview some questions about historical inquiry. I would like to go back to that. Have you used historical inquiry (or doing history) teaching methods (In other words, have you done any activities where students answer historical questions by using source evidence)? Why have or haven't you used historical inquiry? And if so, could you describe some activities that you used that were inquiry-based?

12. Some argue that history teachers should teach students to think like historians about the past. Do you agree or disagree with that? Have you had activities in class that reflect this? Do you think it was successful? Why or why not? What were your students' reactions?

**Interview 6 Protocol**  
(First Year Classroom Teachers – End)

**I. Pedagogy/Beliefs About Learning**

1. Thinking about your teaching methods since the beginning of student teaching, have you become more student-centered, more teacher-centered, or stayed about the same (if you have stayed the same, would you consider you teaching student- or teacher-centered)? Why do you think this has been the case? Has the context of the schools you have taught in affected this? Are the teachers in your department more student- or teacher-centered? Are you encouraged to teach one way or the other at your school?

2. You described most of your own high school's teachers (especially your history teachers) as traditional and somewhat teacher-centered and transmission-oriented in their teaching (may also include cooperating teachers, current teachers at first-year school); you have stated that you do not want to teach that way and you have shown a degree of preference for student-centered and constructivist-oriented teaching. Why have you chosen not to teach the way they taught you?

Probe: What has influenced you to believe that way of teaching is undesirable? Have there been times where you felt you were teaching like high school teachers you had? (or do you ever feel like you are imitating the style of your high school teachers when they teach?) If so, how did you react? How did that make you feel? Was it positive or negative?

3. Have you used historical inquiry (or doing history) teaching methods (In other words, have you done any activities where students answer historical questions by using source evidence)? Why have or haven't you used historical inquiry? And if so, could you describe some activities that you used that were inquiry-based?

4. Some argue that history teachers should teach students to think like historians about the past. Do you agree or disagree with that? Have you had activities in class that reflect this? Do you think it was successful? Why or why not? What were your students' reactions?

5. In past interviews, you have agreed with the idea that students learn by constructing meaning and that student-centered activities were desirable. Have there been any barriers to using teaching methods that are aligned these ideas in your classroom?

Probe: Classroom management? School context? Content demands?

**II. School Context**

6. Does your department or department head in your department have a particular view of history content (what should be covered and specific historical perspectives that are better)? If so, could you describe it? Do you agree or disagree with their view? Have you had to teach content you felt was unimportant or have been forced to skip content you think was important? How did you react to this?

7. Does your department or department head have a particular view of pedagogy (how you should teach)? If so, could you describe it? Do you agree or disagree with their view? Have you taught in any ways that you feel go against what you believe is best? How did you react to this?

8. Were there any demands from your department head or school leaders that you have resisted or ignored this year? If so, why did you disregard these demands?

9. You mentioned that your teaching would have benefited from the development of a tool kit (For Mike - do you believe your teacher preparation gave you a tool kit as you set off on your own into the classroom). Do you still agree with this? Where would you have liked to develop this tool kit? Have you been able to develop one on your own? It also appears that you are relatively isolated in your department. Has this affected your ability to develop your pedagogy?

#### 10. Individual Questions

Harrison: At times in our interviews you said student-centered activities are best, but you also seem to often lecture or lead students in teacher-centered discussions. Does that accurately describe your teaching? So why do you tend to lecture more, when you think student-centered activities are better? Along those same lines, you have said that you think that lower level students have difficulty doing group work, but also that group work works best for them. So what do you mean by that? Why do you think this is?

Mike: It seems that at your current school there is alignment between how you view teaching and how your school views teaching. Do you think this has influenced the development of your pedagogy? What about during student teaching, where it seemed your cooperating teacher was different from you philosophically (more traditional)? How do you think that has influenced the development of pedagogy?

Kim: It seems that at your current school there is not much alignment between how you view teaching and how your school views teaching (or at least your department head). Do you think this has influenced the development of your pedagogy? It seems your department head and the students here prefer more teacher-centered, lecture-based instruction, where you prefer more student-centered instruction. If this is so, how have you reacted to this conflict? Have you conformed to their view or resisted?

11. Do you see yourself working at the same school/in the same job next year? If not, ask why. What would it take for you to stay? If yes, ask what it is that is keeping them in the position.

12. Is there anything you would like to add about your teaching experience to help me better understand it?

**Appendix B**

**OBSERVATION FIELDS NOTES:  
TEACHER CLASSROOM**

**I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Name of instructor(s):	
Course title:	
Students grade and level:	
Location of class (school, building, room)	
Types of instructional techniques used:	
Observer:	
Date of observation:	
Start time:	
End time:	

**II. CONTEXT**

Total number of students present:	
Number of male students:	
Number female students:	
Number of visible non-white students:	
Number of visible white students:	
Other non-students (beside instructors)	
Description of physical setting: Include a drawing of the room set up, including your location in the room:	

