

**Making Meaning of Constructivism:  
A Longitudinal Study of Beginning History Teachers' Beliefs and Practices**

**Christopher C. Martell**

Department of Curriculum and Teaching

Boston University, School of Education

([cmartell@bu.edu](mailto:cmartell@bu.edu))

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### **Abstract**

*This longitudinal interpretative case study examined the constructivist beliefs and related practices of four secondary history teachers from their teacher preparation through their first year in the classroom. The results of this study showed that issues of historical content knowledge and classroom control were major barriers for the implementation of constructivist-oriented practices. However, contrary to some previous studies, learning to teach in transmission-oriented contexts did not result in the diminishing of the teachers' constructivist beliefs and in some ways affirmed their constructivist beliefs. Third, the teachers expressed that a lack of practical tools hindered their ability to better and more frequently use constructivist-oriented practices in their classroom.*

### **Purpose**

Despite a widespread embracement of constructivism by social studies teacher educators, there appears to be little widespread or systemic change in history teaching (Barton & Levstik, 2004; VanSledright, 2011). Numerous studies have shown social studies education has been steeped in rote memorization of facts (Adler, 1991; Goodlad, 1984; Leinhardt, Stainton, Virji, & Odoroff, 1994; Wineburg, 2001). A nationwide survey found 55% of social studies teachers identified as transmission-oriented in their beliefs, and when compared across school disciplines they ranked second from the bottom of teachers identifying as constructivist (Ravitz, Becker, & Wong, 2000). At the heart of this study is the conflict between preparing teachers with a disposition toward constructivism and their entrance into the field of history education that continues to be transmission-oriented.

Adding to the dilemma of learning to be a constructivist teacher in a transmission-oriented field, there is strong evidence that many constructivist-oriented teacher education program interventions have little effect on changing the transmission-oriented beliefs teachers develop before entering the programs (Richardson, 1996; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). However, there is evidence showing some programs that build upon the already present constructivist beliefs of preservice teachers can be productive (Richardson, 1996; Wideen, et al., 1998). Few studies follow preservice teachers from preservice to inservice (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005) and the studies that do exist are incredibly rare in social studies (Adler, 1991, 2008; Armento, 1996; Banks & Parker, 1990; Clift & Brady, 2005).

Without more longitudinal work on learning to teach, we have little evidence of the impact of teacher preparation programs beyond completion of those programs. To better understand the disconnect between beliefs and practices, this study examined longitudinally four secondary preservice social studies teachers, who identified as being constructivist teachers, during their student teaching practicum through their first year of teaching in the classroom. Specifically, it focused on the relationship between the teachers' constructivist-oriented beliefs and their use of related practices in their history classrooms. This study specifically asked the following research questions: Do beginning history teachers' constructivist beliefs and related teaching practices change over time? If so, how, why, and under what conditions? Is there consistency between their beliefs and practices?

### **Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

This study uses constructivist theories of teaching and learning as its lens. Although constructivist learning is not a fixed concept, I am guided by Richardson's (1997) conception of it as "a learning or meaning-making theory. It suggests that individuals create their own new understandings, based upon the interaction of what they already know and believe, and the phenomena or ideas with which they come into contact" (p. 3). Simultaneously, this study is double framed. The first frame is used to look at beginning teachers who identify as constructivist. Here, the teachers define what "constructivist" means to them and describe how they are (or are not) using constructivist-oriented practices. The second frame of this study uses constructivist theories of teaching and learning to examine those teachers' beliefs and practices.

There are numerous constructivist interpretations, but ultimately these different perspectives are as Zeichner (1997) put it, "committed to the same set of general ideas about learning" (p. ix). Because learning is complex and not solely an individual or social process, working from only one of the definitions of constructivist theories of teaching and learning may limit my ability to understand the broader picture. As such, this study takes a pragmatic approach to constructivism, and draws on the various perspectives that share an epistemological root in the view that learners construct their knowledge.

#### **Longitudinal Studies on Learning to Teach**

Although there has been a small surge in the last decade, there are still relatively few longitudinal studies on learning to teach that examine teachers as they transition from preservice to inservice. Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005) found, "There are still only very few studies in which the graduates of teacher education programs are followed into

the first years of teaching” (p. 15-16). Furthermore, Adler’s (2008) review of social studies teacher education also revealed that few studies examine the development of history teachers from teacher preparation into their first years in the classroom. As such, most of the studies that inform this work are from outside the subject of social studies.

Researchers at the University of Washington and Stanford University have produced one of the most comprehensive studies on learning to teach (Grossman, Valencia, Evans, Thompson, & Martin, 2000; Valencia, Martin, Place, & Grossman, 2009; Valencia, Place, Martin, & Grossman, 2006). These researchers examined 15 English Language Arts (ELA) teachers through a four-year qualitative case study, which used sociocultural theory as the theoretical lens. Of these numerous findings, two were of particular interest for this study. First, in the teachers’ second and third years, they used the concepts of instructional scaffolding and writing process learned during teacher preparation to critique several antithetical practices they developed in their first year of teaching. This would suggest that much of what is learned in preservice teacher education might not overtly come to fruition until teachers have overcome the turbulence of the first year. Second, the school context, curriculum, and teacher content knowledge appeared to deeply influence the practices of beginning teachers. The teachers with stronger content knowledge were able to construct their own programs around mandated curricula and learned the most about reading instruction, while teachers with less content knowledge or more restrictive teaching contexts learned the least.

Several other longitudinal studies inform this work. Seven studies had a consistent finding that school context was a key factor in teachers’ use of constructivist-oriented instruction (Agee, 2004; Bickmore, Smagorinsky, & O’Donnell-Allen, 2005; Cady,

Meier, & Lubinski, 2006; Grisham, 2000; Mulholland & Wallace, 2003; Newell, Tallman, & Letcher, 2009; Steele, 2001). Particularly, teachers were far more likely to use constructivist-oriented practices if their colleagues were more constructivist-oriented. While three other studies found that teachers' prior beliefs have a powerful negative influence over their use of practices advocated in teacher preparation programs (Alger, 2009; Cook, Smagorinsky, Fry, Konopak, & Moore, 2002; Donnell, 2007). All of these studies highlight the complexity of beginning teachers' beliefs and the reality that their beliefs can change considerably over time.

### **Studies on the Development of Beginning Teachers' Beliefs**

There is a substantial body of research on the development of beginning teachers' beliefs. In their extensive critical review of 93 studies on learning to teach, Wideen et al. (1998) found many teacher education program interventions have little effect on the beliefs teachers developed before entering programs, but they also found that "some beginning teachers are amenable to changing their views of teaching" (p. 159). In recent research on beginning teachers' beliefs, three studies found that constructivist-oriented teacher education programs had little impact on beginning teachers that entered with the transmission-oriented beliefs (Andrew, 2006; Lemberger, Hewson, & Park, 1999; Liang & Gabel, 2005). However, several studies of novice teachers showed that under certain conditions, including the modeling of constructivist techniques in their university courses, teachers were more likely to embrace or develop constructivist beliefs (Leavy, McSorley, & Boté, 2007; Sanger, 2008; Stockinger, 2007; Swars, Hart, Smith, Smith, & Tolar, 2007). Other studies revealed that several barriers exist for beginning constructivist teachers, including conflicts between student teachers' constructivist-

oriented beliefs and the transmission-oriented beliefs of their cooperating teachers (Haney & McArthur, 2002; Pourdavood & Harrington, 1998), a lack of comfort using constructivist-oriented techniques in their practice, as well as, a teacher's lack of strong content knowledge (Crawford, 2007; Holt-Reynolds, 2000).

### **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) secondary history and social studies methods course, which was taken concurrently for most preservice teachers with their student teaching practicum. The instructor for this course was a colleague, which allowed me access to the participants. 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 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 activities such as simulations, debates, and 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. The other two participants expressed a strong preference for instructional methods that I 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 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, 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. 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 teaching in her or his 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 experiences. 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: teacher’s beliefs, instructional practices, and school/classroom contexts.

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 was 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.

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.

### **Results**

All four teachers constructed their own working definitions of constructivism. These definitions generally shared a common view that students make meaning or create understanding based on their experiences with the content. Since constructivism is a term that varies greatly in meaning, in the discussion of each case, I will attempt to explain how the teachers defined constructivism and what parts of constructivist theories of teaching and learning they most closely identified with. Furthermore, all four participants in this study showed varying degrees of change over time related to their constructivist beliefs. Mike, Kim, and Stacy's beliefs became more constructivist-oriented over time, while Harrison's became more transmission-oriented. I argue that the reason for these variations related to an interplay between the contextual differences of their student teaching and first year placements, the teachers' abilities to manage the classroom, as well as the disciplines that these teachers had backgrounds in. Table 2 is intended to help the reader better visualize the experiences of each teacher.

**Table 2. Contexts and Issues of Content and/or Control**

	<b>Stacy</b>	<b>Harrison</b>	<b>Mike</b>	<b>Kim</b>
Content Area Degree(s)	BA and PhD in Sociology	BA in International Relations	BA in History	BA in History
Student Teaching	Transmission-oriented cooperating teacher  <i>Reaction: Expressed struggles with content and control</i>	Constructivist-oriented cooperating teacher  <i>Reaction: Expressed some small struggles with control</i>	Transmission-oriented cooperating teacher  <i>Reaction: Expressed few struggles with content or control</i>	Constructivist-oriented cooperating teachers  <i>Reaction: Expressed few struggles with content or control</i>
First Year in the Classroom	School that supported constructivist beliefs  <i>Reaction: Expressed less struggles with content or control</i>	School that did not support constructivist beliefs  <i>Reaction: Expressed struggles with content and control</i>	School that supported constructivist beliefs  <i>Reaction: Expressed few struggles with content or control</i>	School that did not support constructivist beliefs  <i>Reaction: Expressed few struggles with content or control</i>

**The Cases of Stacy and Harrison: Content and Control**

The cases of Stacy and Harrison illustrate that limited knowledge of historical content and lack of classroom control are major barriers for beginning teachers to act on their constructivist beliefs and use constructivist-oriented teaching practices. From the data, I make two assertions. First, when beginning teachers have a limited understanding of the content they teach, this decreases their confidence in teaching and prevents them from taking pedagogical risks. Second, when teachers are unable to control the behaviors of students in their classroom, they will decrease their use of constructivist-oriented techniques, because it involves a level of risk taking by engaging in more student-centered activities, placing more of the responsibility of learning on the student, and increasing the chances of misbehavior.

**The Case of Stacy.** Stacy is a White female, who grew up in a small and wealthy suburban town in New Hampshire. After high school, she attended Jesuit University for her undergraduate degree in sociology and Rhodes University for her PhD in sociology. Following the completion of her PhD, she enrolled in the City University Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program in social studies education.

Stacy's personal definition of constructivism was where "the student is either building up or creating their knowledge," and when asked to elaborate she said, "If I present them with a counter-argument ... and they're forced to evaluate that against their own opinion and they still come out with their own opinion then maybe in a way that is constructivist" (Interview 4, October 13, 2009). Here, Stacy framed constructivism in terms of meaning making, where students are forced to question their understanding. When I asked her if she agreed with this, she said to some degree. She felt learning was a combination of students remembering what they are told and constructing meaning from their experiences.

Over the course of the study, out of the four participants, Stacy appeared to have the most dramatic shifts in her beliefs. At the beginning of the study she showed a preference for constructivism. However, as Stacy faced struggles of content and control during her student teaching practicum, she began to seriously question how she thought students learn and her constructivist beliefs were weakened. During her first year, strides in her ability to manage the classroom and her increasing comfort with the content influenced an important migration back toward stronger constructivist beliefs.

During her student teaching at Woodtown High, issues of classroom management led Stacy to rely heavily on direct instruction and individual seatwork to control the behaviors of her students. Consequently, Stacy's inability to control the students led her to begin questioning her own beliefs about how students learn. In the second half of her practicum, she described her teaching as primarily relying on "direct instruction and discussion. Where you give students information, they are then asked to assess the information, or process the information, and usually facilitate it with a primary sources or

an image or a document” (Interview 2, April 22, 2009). She saw activities where students work in groups as the most difficult and had significantly reduced the amount of group work in her classroom. The reason for this shift was,

I think it is hard for students to work in groups and effectively get out the information you’re hoping they will get out of the pieces. A lot of time I feel that just devolves into something that is really not that productive. When you are able to use direct instruction to make sure students all get the same background information. (Interview 2, April 22, 2009)

She also added,

That is something I probably decided after teaching. ... I initially thought you needed to do a lot of group work. That is if you didn’t do group work, you were somehow doing something wrong, [and] students should get their hands dirty and figure things out. (Interview 2, April 22, 2009)

This was telling, because it showed evidence that her beliefs were changing. Previously she defined bad teaching as excessive dissemination of information to the students, and now she was beginning to see more value in that type of instruction. This change appeared motivated by her difficulties to use group work, an activity she previously valued highly.

Stacy’s first year in the classroom was at Cottagehill High. It was there that Stacy expressed having an epiphany-like experience as a result of the new context. Stacy said of her teaching,

You know I’ve had no problems, none.

Christopher: How has this lack of problems affected your instruction? Are you willing to do different things now?

Stacy: [I am] much more willing to do the group work. I know we talked before that there was a real hesitance to do that, because I felt you give up some control. Because if you're working with one group whose to say what the other people are doing. ...

Christopher: Would you be willing to do that activity now at your current school?

Stacy: Absolutely, absolutely.

Christopher: And you don't think you'd have any problems with it probably?

Stacy: No. None I think. There's a respect for each other. (Interview 5, February 18, 2010)

Out of the four participants during this period, Stacy expressed the greatest desire to become more constructivist-oriented in her practice, especially in regards to group work. This appeared to be directly related to the easing of her classroom management issues.

Stacy became increasingly more student-centered in her classroom practices during her first year. In an observation in the middle of her first year, Stacy spent the entire class having students work individually on their research papers. For the research paper, she asked students to explore a historical question and use historical evidence to back up their theses. During this class, she moved from one student to another, helping students individually with their papers. Students were encouraged to partner with classmates to help them in the writing process. It would be hard to imagine her doing this



in the final weeks of her student teaching, where spending large amounts of time working with individual students would have lessened her ability to control the class.

**The Case of Harrison.** Harrison is an Asian male who was born in Canada and from the ages 5 to 15 lived in Hong Kong. Harrison first moved to the United States when he was 15 to attend a prestigious boarding school in Massachusetts. After high school, Harrison attended Georges University, an Ivy League school, where he majored in international relations. After two years in the private sector, Harrison decided to enroll in the City University MAT program in social studies education.

Harrison said of constructivism that, “My understanding currently is that students construct their own knowledge” (Interview 4, October 19, 2009). He elaborated further on this,

What it means to me is [that] I don’t give them an idea that is completely set in stone. I don’t say this is exactly how it is. I encourage them to use their skills and big ideas to you know determine their own meaning. (Interview 4, October 19, 2009)

When I asked him if he considered himself a constructivist, he said,

Somewhat I guess. Because according to my definition, the onus would be on them to just totally come up with things based on their prior historical knowledge and these particular students, and maybe all high school students, I don’t think that they have enough prior knowledge to be able to just construct things, because I don’t think it’s constructing knowledge out of nowhere, it’s based on prior knowledge” (Interview 4, October 19, 2009).

Harrison's understanding of constructivism seemed to include a view that students could not construct meaning or knowledge unless a certain amount of information had been transmitted to them. Since he viewed his students as having limited prior knowledge, he believed they struggled to construct their own knowledge and required someone to give them the basic facts first.

During student teaching at Woodtown High, Harrison's practices were primarily lecture and discussion-based, but he also occasionally described having students perform skits, sing songs, write journal entries, and give presentations. Harrison most often preferred to use what he dubbed "Q&A," which was primarily a mixture of lecturing and asking the students to respond to his questions. This type of instruction appeared to be very similar to the type of instruction he received in high school; a type of instruction he believed would not work well with all of his students.

Harrison went into his first year at Smallborough High focused heavily on classroom management. Yet, he never seemed to find the right strategy. Like Stacy, Harrison spent much of his summer thinking about classroom set up and creating classroom rules. Coincidentally, Stacy and Harrison also read the same book in preparation for the first year in the classroom. Harrison told me, "I read the first days of school by Harry Wong and Rosemary Wong this summer and it's given me some ideas on how to set that" (Interview 3, August 26, 2009). It is unclear how successful this was for Harrison, but in October he told me, "[the students have] given me almost no classroom management problems, well that one that you observed I've had the most issues with, but I am still enjoying teaching" (Interview 4, October 19, 2009). As I would later realize, Harrison was struggling with classroom management, but he did not want to reveal this to

me at first.

As his first year progressed he began to more openly discuss classroom management issues with me. He said at mid-year, “the lower level students give me a challenge” and “with one of the [lower level] classes there’s a lot of disciplinary problems. The kids just have very, very short attention spans” (Interview 5, February 10, 2010). Furthermore, Harrison’s descriptions of continually changing his classroom management strategies offer evidence of his classroom control issues. In almost every interview, he would tout some new classroom management strategy he was using or new book he was reading on classroom management, professing this time it seemed to be working. In spite of this, it was always the case that in my next interview, he would say he no longer was using that strategy and was relying on a new strategy.

When I asked Harrison about these changes in instruction, he responded, “I mean it’s certainly still a goal to make it engaging for them, but at the same time for especially the lower level students, now I want to really focus on basic academic skills” (Interview 5, February 10, 2010). By February of his first year, Harrison expressed an intentional decision to narrow the curriculum, particularly for his lower level students, to compensate for what he saw as their lack of prior knowledge. Although Harrison continued to describe his practices as constructivist-oriented, he also described seeing more value in the idea of teaching through transmission. He said,

I think I’m a little bit more of the transmitter. ... Part of the reason is with the kids I teach, when I get them to do a reading and if I don’t talk about the reading in class, a lot of them will just not understand it well enough. ... It’s not complete

transmission. It's like reinforcement, so they get it a lot better. (Interview 6, May 17, 2010)

Harrison also said this change in belief and practices had been in part influenced by his recent reading of the book *Teach Like A Champion* by Doug Lemov, which is highly transmission-oriented in its perspective of teaching and learning. He said,

And I bought a book that just was released. ... I can see a big section of it is teaching is about teaching reading. So that's something I'm going to work on over the summer, just some of the more like basic skills that a lot of lower level kids need. (Interview 6, May 17, 2010)

This was another example where Harrison seemed to be searching for the next book or piece of advice from a colleague that would be the fix for his classroom issues. In this case, a book that had an underlying assumption that students learn primarily through the transmission of content knowledge from teacher to student and that by using certain teaching techniques (loosely rooted in behavioral psychology) students' behaviors can be controlled, offered him a new promise of helping his students learn.

This change in Harrison's view of teaching and learning can be seen in his redefinition of quality teaching. By the final interview, he saw being a great teacher as having strong classroom management and getting the students to know the "answer," he said,

You can't be a great teacher if you're not a good classroom manager. And the examples of young teachers who are doing really well, a lot of it seems to be because they're good at managing. They're good at getting kids the answer ... They're good at planning activities that are very good at helping [the students]

achieve the objective and it's the same with assessing those objectives too.

(Interview 6, May 17, 2010)

Although Harrison had not stopped identifying as constructivist, he now added to his previous statements that students also required some level of teaching through transmission. This change in belief may be explained by Harrison's continued struggles with classroom management (and to a lesser extent his limited historical content knowledge) and his changing conceptions of his students' abilities. This belief change appeared to be influenced by his increased ability to better control students by employing transmission-oriented practices of lecture and teacher-centered discussion.

### **The Cases of Mike and Kimberly: Context**

The cases of Mike and Kimberly illustrate that school context has a significant influence on the constructivist beliefs and practices of beginning history teachers. From the data, I make two assertions. First, transmission-oriented contexts can actually have an unexpected positive influence on beginning teachers by confirming their constructivist beliefs, if teachers are able to reflect on their beliefs and practices. Finally, the case of Kimberly illustrates that extended placement in a transmission-oriented context can have a negative impact on a teacher's professional life. Although Kimberly's constructivist beliefs were strengthened, she eventually left teaching, in part due to her negative teaching experiences.

**The Case of Mike.** Mike is a White male, who grew up in Providence, Rhode Island. In third grade, he moved to a predominately White and wealthy suburb. Mike attended City University, where he majored in history and earned his teacher licensure as an undergraduate.

Mike defined constructivism by saying, “I guess I have to use the word ‘construct’ their own meaning from the text, the source, the whatever it may be, given varying degrees of prior knowledge” (Interview 4, October 22, 2009). Mike saw constructivism as a process where students make meaning from the content presented to them. This can be done through a process of using direct instruction first, and then building on it with an activity that goes deeper, or by exposing students to certain materials and then having them piece together their understanding.

During his student teaching at Midway High, Mike described having limited issues with classroom management, perhaps as a result of his cooperating teacher’s strong classroom management skills. He said,

Controlling the class honestly is something I thought would be pretty difficult for me at first, but I haven’t had too many problems. I think it’s definitely attributed to my cooperating teacher ‘cause she had a certain kind of class ... it wasn’t a difficult transition for me to go over and kind of treat them the same way.

(Interview 1, March 12, 2009)

Mike’s limited issues in regard to classroom management allowed him one less worry as a student teacher. Subsequently, Mike was willing to experiment with student-centered activities.

However, where Mike said his cooperating teacher had good classroom management, he also believed she lacked variation in her pedagogy. Mike said,

She would come in. She would you know usually do notes on an overhead for a big chunk of the class and then she would supplement it with *History Alive!* activities sometimes, but some classes were just notes. ... So, I saw a lot of direct

instruction. She would even talk about how she felt that students need a certain dose of direct instruction to really understand the material. So when I had that as my primary means of observation, that's what influenced me and now that I've gotten to talk to more teachers about it, I've kind of moved away from that and more towards the group dynamic. ... [During student teaching,] I used even more of the *History Alive!* activities than she would use. Instead of just supplementing with the notes I would try to like use those as the lesson sometimes. (Interview 5, February 17, 2010)

Here Mike shows the disagreement he had with his cooperating teacher's beliefs, but because he felt he was a guest in her classroom, he used more direct instruction than he would have liked. Yet, he also strategically increased the types of activities he believed were best, without going against his cooperating teacher's recommendation to have a good amount of lecturing.

As Mike transitioned from his practicum into his first year at Beachmont High, he continued to focus on his objective of including more student-centered activities in his teaching. Influenced by the predominately transmission-oriented context of his student teaching, he wanted to mold his own practice in a different light. Coincidentally for Mike, his new school had a heavy emphasis on constructivist-oriented teaching. This would encourage Mike to further develop student-centered lessons.

Both of these lessons were heavily student-centered and constructivist-oriented in their instruction and Mike described them as helping students construct their understanding of the time period. Mike said of his teaching,

I like to involve students in group work a lot. I think those activities where they engage each other and form opinions and you know maybe throw something out and have someone else respond to it. ... You came during a *History Alive!* activity [and] I think those kind of outside of the box type thinking activities are useful in a sense that they avert your eyes from the notes and or from the text they get you to think on some other levels, so I like those kinds of activities” (Interview 2, April 1, 2009).

Here, Mike connected his constructivist beliefs to his preference for student-centered practices. Whether it was group work or individual activities, he believed the goal of instruction was to help students construct knowledge.

At the same time, he continued to see lecturing to students as an ineffective way to help them learn. He said,

Basically the more involved you are in your learning and the more involved the teacher gets you, the more likely you are to retain that information ... just hearing one voice when you’re getting lectured to and I put a PowerPoint with some notes up, just [having the students] write it down, is not necessarily learning it.

(Interview 4, October 22, 2009)

Mike’s view was affirmed when he saw little evidence that the students actually remembered what he lectured to them, but he said, “the students have learned well through activities where they form their own knowledge, are active in thinking about the material” (Interview 4, October 22, 2009). He believed these student activities were more meaningful and helped students not only remember information, but also better understand that information.



Beachmont High seemed to be the polar opposite of Mike's student teaching placement in Midway. Mike said of the school, "I've noticed direct instruction definitely kept to a minimum, we really encourage the kids to work on activities themselves, to sort of create the knowledge, be active in their learning" (Interview 4, October 22, 2009). He added, "Definitely I would say everyone [at my school] agrees with that kind of model, the active learner ... engage the students in different types of activities don't just kind of stand up there every day and talk" (Interview 4, October 22, 2009). In his first year, Mike found supportive colleagues that had similar views of teaching and learning. He said, "I think the best part is definitely the faculty. My colleagues, everyone has just been really receptive" (Interview 4, October 22, 2009). Mike relied heavily on his colleagues for recommendations in lesson planning and instructional recommendations.

**The Case of Kim.** Kim is a White female who grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. As an undergraduate at City University, she majored in history. After a year, she returned to her alma mater and enrolled in the City University School of Education MAT program.

Kim described constructivism as a process where students build their own understanding. She contrasted this idea to the view of learning as transferring one person's understanding to another. In practice she saw constructivism as heavily associated with learning through inquiry and the opposite was where students absorb information from teachers telling them facts. She said,

I think you are better off trying to help [students] discover it through their own means. Instead of telling them what the Declaration of Independence was, have them read the Declaration of Independence. And guide them through. ... I think you have to be the sage on the stage every once in a while, but I think that its

probably a more authentic learning experience when you are learning it yourself.

(Interview 3, August 28, 2009)

She connected this idea back to her experience student teaching and the advice of the principal of her practicum site, encouraging her to be the “guide on the side, not sage on the stage.”

During student teaching at Woodtown High, Kim was in a context aligned with her constructivist beliefs. As a result of this alignment, she took advantage of her constructivist-oriented cooperating teachers as role models to learn from and spent considerable time with them creating lessons that she hoped to use again in her first year. She described her student teaching as a chance to experiment because her cooperating teachers taught the units in different orders. This allowed her teach a unit once and then a few weeks later teach it again with a different class.

At the same time, Kim felt that seeing more variation in instructional methods would have been helpful. She said, “I think, mostly I’m just limited by my own imagination in some sense ... from my own high school experience, what I’ve observed in my cooperating teachers, is fairly limited, [so] I’ve gone on the Internet and looked for stuff” (Interview 1, March 10, 2009). Although she generally described her cooperating teachers positively and being aligned with her beliefs about teaching and learning, she wished they had introduced more varied types of activities to her.

During her first year in the classroom at Sherwood-Havenly High School, Kim’s department head was heavily transmission-oriented in his beliefs, and this conflicted with her own vision of teaching and learning. She described her department head as incredibly demanding and controlling and that his traditional views of education conflicted with her

own. During her first month, he specifically requested that she lecture more. Then a month later, he requested that her colleague change the lesson plan of a formal observation from an activity to lecture, because “he didn’t want to see that lesson, because he didn’t think that was teaching” (Interview 6, June 16, 2010). This made Kim believe that she had no choice but to comply with his instructional demands for her classroom. Out of fear of losing her job, she did not want to speak up about her disagreement with this perspective. She said, “I just keep my mouth shut because I’ve been told the best thing to do is to just lie under the radar until you’re tenured” (Interview 4, October 23, 2009).

By October of her first year, Kim described her instruction as regressing into lecture and discussion. She said, “Basically you put a PowerPoint together with some notes. Have them copy down the notes. Show some images. Discuss the images. Do like an image interpretation and send them on their merry way” (Interview 4, October 23, 2009). Kim felt that this type of instructional environment led the students to prefer teacher-centered and transmission-oriented ways of teaching. She said her students demand lecturing followed by a test on the material, and she described a “grade crazy” culture. She said,

I get no positive feedback for putting in all this extra time and effort that it takes to come up with these student-centered, more interactive lessons. I get crap from faculty members. I get crap from the kids. (Interview 6, June 16, 2010)

Even though Kim strived to teach in ways aligned with her beliefs, she felt incredibly unsupported.

Kim decided to leave the school at the end of her first year, as a result of this disagreement with the school's teaching philosophy in combination with her boyfriend's acceptance to a doctoral program in Chicago (In addition, after the completion of this study, Kim decided to leave teaching altogether and attend law school). In March she told her department head she was leaving the school at the end of the school year, which led her department head to essentially ignore her for the remainder of the year. This had a liberating effect on her teaching. She said, "I think it's easier because he doesn't pay any attention to me at all ... which is fine. I actually think that's a little bit better" (Interview 6, June 16, 2010). This separation from her department head allowed Kim to increase certain the types of teaching that were aligned with her beliefs.

### **Cross Case Analysis**

The individual cases of Stacy, Harrison, Mike, and Kim highlight that history teachers, like those in other school subjects, face issues of content and classroom control, as well as barriers in school contexts that have a major impact on their success (or lack thereof) in implementing constructivist-oriented practices. However, the cross case analysis draws out some important factors that can help reduce the barriers beginning teachers face in teaching history in constructivist ways.

An important theme that emerged across the four cases was the need for teachers to have more development of practical tools for teaching. Three participants specifically expressed a need for a better teacher "tool kit." This term was not a term widely used in their teacher preparation program, and appeared to be generated from the teachers themselves. Moreover, all four of the teachers in this study expressed a desire to use more constructivist-oriented practices, but were unable as a result of their limited teaching

repertoires. As such, the teachers generally relied on transmission-oriented instructional methods, such as lecture and discussion, more often than they preferred.

My understanding of the appropriation of tools for teaching is rooted in constructivist learning theory and 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, namely conceptual and practice tools, which teachers choose to inform their decisions and conduct their teaching.

### **Conceptual Tools**

Grossman, et al. (1999) argued that although teachers may adopt the conceptual tools during their teacher preparation programs, they lack the practical tools to teach in ways aligned with their conceptualization of teaching. On the other hand, they argued that teachers might use practical tools, without the conceptual understanding behind these tools. An important part of this development Grossman, et al. referred to as appropriation or “the 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). Here, the social environment, whether the teacher preparation program or the school context where they teach, has an important influence on their 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.

### **Practical Tools**

The analysis across the four cases showed that the participants had 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)

Harrison stated he desired a "repertoire of lesson plans or how to teach something, a tool kit" (Interview 4, October 19, 2009). In a later interview, he also said, "That book that I

told you about, which lists specific strategies. That's exactly the tool kit that I've been looking for actually" (Interview 6, May 17, 2010). Both Stacy and Harrison desired more help from their teacher preparation program in making their teaching repertoires stronger.

Kim expressed a very similar idea when I asked her about engaging students in a way that was aligned with her constructivist 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 that she could have built 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**

This idea of helping preservice teachers develop practical tools is particularly relevant to teacher educators' attempts to develop teachers that use constructivist-oriented teaching techniques. Since transmission models of teaching still permeates many schools today, if teacher preparation programs want to support constructivist teachers, they must



provide those teachers with constructivist-oriented practical tools to take with them into the classroom. However, I want to be clear that I am not advocating for teaching by recipe. When I use the idea of practical tools, I am arguing for classroom practices, strategies, and resources with an immediate and local utility. Since these contexts will vary, teachers must be continually borrowing and developing their own practical tools. At the same time, it is important to note that practical tools do not guarantee success as a constructivist teacher. Rather, teachers must develop a conceptual understanding of teaching through inquiry, so they can use these practical tools successfully. The beginning teachers in this study expressed a need for more practical tools. More specifically the participants told me they would have benefitted from more sharing of lesson and unit plans with their peers, lists of generic instructional techniques that could be employed in different situations, and increased demonstrations from their professors and teaching assistants in using these instructional techniques.

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. Like the teachers in Grossman, et al.’s (2000) study, the teachers in this study sought out other places for practical tools. However, they believed a better place to develop this would be

their teacher preparation, because they saw this as the context where they adopted many of the related conceptual tools.

This study makes several contributions to our understanding of the development of beginning social studies teachers' constructivist beliefs and practices. First, this study links social studies teacher education to previous constructivist works in math, English language arts, and science. Like the research in other disciplines, it expands our understanding of learning to teach social studies beyond the years of preservice teacher education. While it showed issues of content knowledge and classroom control were major barriers for implementation of constructivist-oriented practices, it also showed learning to teach in transmission-oriented contexts did not necessarily result in the diminishing of beginning teachers' constructivist beliefs. It also affirmed that prospective teachers need strong developments of conceptual and practical tools to be able to teach in constructivist ways.

This study is currently in its next phase with data being collected in the teachers' second and third years in the classroom. This will help us better understand how teachers develop constructivist-oriented teaching over longer amounts of time. Longitudinal studies from other disciplines indicate that these years will be crucial in understanding the development of beginning social studies teachers, yet examining these first two years of learning to teach has also proven to offer key ideas for teacher educators to consider.

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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 teaching 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:	

