

**ENGAGING WITH SOCIOCONSTRUCTIVISM:
SOCIAL STUDIES PRESERVICE TEACHERS LEARNING AND USING
HISTORICAL THINKING IN CONTEMPORARY CLASSROOMS**

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ABSTRACT

“Knowing is doing is being.”

- Davis, Sumara, Luce-Kepler (2000)

This dissertation focuses on socioconstructivist pedagogy as it is manifest in the understanding and experiences by secondary social studies preservice teachers engaging in the practice of historical reasoning during their apprentice teaching semester. The means by which they facilitate historical thinking as a socioconstructivist concept in diverse classrooms and the resulting successes, hesitations, and negotiations is of primary interest in this case study. Further, the intricate circumstances of modern schools and beginning teachers provide context in this qualitative case study conducted from an interpretive epistemological perspective.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Whereas socioconstructivism is not new to academia, it has engendered a fresh perspective on learning and renewed application in schooling in the 21st century (Applefield, Huber, & Moallem, 2000-2001; Henson, 2003; Phillips, 1995; Richardson, 2003; Terhart, 2003). Myriad legitimate forms of constructivism can be found in the current educational literature (Doolittle & Hicks, 2003; Fosnot, 2005) -- as many as 18 variations are described and named by Matthews (2000). Constructivist notions have been extensively explored theoretically and practically in both historical and modern contexts. However, given its development as a learning theory and its growing use in classrooms, empirical studies involving constructivism and socioconstructivism are limited but increasing as the overall constructivist framework is strengthened (Fosnot, 2005; Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Green & Gredler, 2002; Palincsar, 1998; Richardson, 2003). Despite its complexity and variety, (Applefield et al., 2000-2001; Harris & Alexander, 1998; Harris & Graham, 1994; Matthews, 2000; Prawat & Floden, 1994; Richardson, 2003) socioconstructivism continues to be prominent and intriguing as an important learning theory and pedagogical practice in education.

A particular manifestation of socioconstructivist pedagogy lies in historical thinking -- used in the social studies as a method of teaching history in a rigorous, contextual, and realistic way (Davis, 1998; Seixas, 1993; VanSledright, 2002; VanSledright & Afflerbach, 2000; Wineburg, 2001). Historical thinking is a technique used by professional historians that has been adopted by social studies educators in an effort not only to lend authenticity to learning history, but also to pique interest in

historical events and characters (Davis, 1998; Seixas, 1993; Spoehr & Spoehr, 1994; VanSledright, 2002; Wineburg, 2001). According to Bohan and Davis (1998),

Intriguing history requires the imaginative ability to place oneself back in time, to understand human struggles, actions and consequences, to derive meaning from the stories of persons, places and events, and to make informed judgments on the basis of historical evidence. Conveying such fascinating history to others requires considerable ability, knowledge and effort....Students should be encouraged to imagine many possibilities when thinking of distant times, places, people, and ways of living. (p. 174 - 175)

Both socioconstructivism and historical thinking are currently undergoing an increase in esteem, related research, and use in the classroom. Despite the diligent efforts of educators and researchers, the use of these two important frameworks is not yet widespread (Fosnot, 2005; Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Richardson, 2003; VanSledright, 2002; Wineburg, 2001). Various reasons account for their limited use ranging from the pervasiveness of standardized curriculum and corresponding exams to the difficulty of learning to teach with socioconstructivist principles and techniques of historical thinking (Bohan & Davis, 1998; Grant, 2003; Harris & Alexander, 1998; Mintrop, 2001; Palincsar, 1998; Richardson, 2003; Seixas, 1994, 1998; Smerdon, Burkam, & Lee, 1999).

SOCIOCONSTRUCTIVISM AND HISTORICAL THINKING IN SCHOOLS

Socioconstructivist lessons are actively and interactively authentic; properly designed socioconstructivist activities foster critical thinking skills, deep learning

(Applefield et al., 2000-2001; Blumenfeld, Soloway, Marx, Krajcik, Guzdial, & Palincsar, 1991; Doolittle & Hicks, 2003; Harris & Alexander, 1998; Harris & Graham, 1994; Henson, 2003; Palincsar, 1998; Phillips, 1995; Richardson, 2003; Terhart, 2003) and affective involvement on the students' part (Applefield et al., 2000-2001; Blumenfeld et al., 1991; Henson, 2003; Shulman, 2000). Students contribute to the learning situation by drawing on previous knowledge, strengths and talents while improving individual areas of weakness (Applefield et al., 2000-2001; Harris & Graham, 1994; Henson, 2003; Palincsar, 1998; Terhart, 2003).

Historical thinking is meant to prepare students for an active future civic life with teachers acting as “knowledge facilitators” rather than “knowledge givers” (Grant, 2003), while requiring students to examine their own contexts as well as those of primary and secondary sources and other historical materials (VanSledright, 2002; Wineburg, 2001).

These elements of socioconstructivism, interactive and rigorous lessons involving students' prior knowledge, culture, and empathy may also be found in historical thinking. According to Doolittle and Hicks (2003),

Traditionally, the search for knowledge within the social studies consisted of the search for “truth”; that is, the acquisition of knowledge that mirrors or corresponds to a singular “reality.” Constructivism, however, employs a more flexible, culturally relativistic, and contemplative perspective, where knowledge is constructed based on personal and social experience. (p. 76)

Doolittle and Hicks advocate the use of socioconstructivism in the social studies with particular focus on the use of technology to support and foster student learning.

Socioconstructivist lessons nurture cooperation with others, both within and outside the classroom community (Moll & González, 2004; Prawat & Floden, 1994; Shulman, 2000). Socioconstructivist practice is democratic and inclusive as it provides for student direction of the curriculum and encourages personal responsibility for learning (Donlevey, 2000; Shapiro, 2000). Palincsar (1998) asserts that socioconstructivist practice benefits culturally diverse students; some examples are the use of prior knowledge and the honoring of cultural backgrounds in the classroom, a shared learning relationship between student and teacher, and the contextual learning of curriculum material. In a similar vein, Wineburg (2001) maintains that historical thinking is useful in both the past and the present in nurturing empathy and tolerance for others, “Coming to know others, whether they live on the other side of the tracks or the other side of the millennium, requires the education of our sensibilities” (p. 24) via historical thinking. Seixas (1994) argues that socioconstructivist practice with regards to history education may “generate a diversity of historical investigations for a diversity of students.”

Preservice teachers must negotiate a host of information, ranging from pedagogical practice to campus policy and procedure to classroom management. It is expected that they struggle with the amount and complexity of material they manage as they develop into competent teachers. Classroom management often takes the forefront of concerns where pedagogical practice may serve them best. Beginning teachers, upon graduation from their teacher preparation program, cite the most confidence and comfort in writing and using lesson plans (Benz & Newman, 1985). As they enter the teaching force, it seems that beginning teachers are not as adept at lesson design as they may perceive. Moreover, a secondary use of lesson plans is that of classroom management.

Difficult classroom management situations inhibit teachers' willingness to risk creative lessons such as those entailing socioconstructivist principles or historical thinking (Bullough, 1987; Kagan & Tippins, 1992). Westerman (1991) suggests that beginning teachers have a weak basis in theory of instruction. Often, beginning teachers do not fully access student prior knowledge to optimize learning, either in their lesson construction or actual teaching. Beginning teachers do not have the training or experience to incorporate various elements such as: awareness of students, content knowledge, theoretical knowledge of teaching, student management and disciplinary strategies, and reflection, into their lesson construction (and ultimately teaching) models (Westerman, 1991, p. 301).

As teachers struggle with lesson design, socioconstructivist pedagogy and historical thinking are no exception to difficulty. Bohan and Davis (1998), Yeager and Wilson (1997), and Yeager and Davis (1995) argue for teacher preparation for the task of historical thinking while noting a lack of research in the area of learning to think historically and in turn using historical thinking, concluding, "As we begin increasingly to teach (and to advocate teaching) with primary historical sources, teacher educators must think far more about what it will take to prepare new teachers for that task" (p. 337). Given the recent development and limited scope of socioconstructivist pedagogy (Fosnot, 2005; Richardson, 2003), research literature investigating its use by preservice teachers discusses problematic issues dealing with how preservice teachers learn socioconstructivist pedagogy, how they implement it, and how best to instruct them in using socioconstructivist principles (Anderson & Piazza, 1996; Cook, Smagorinsky, Fry, Konopak, & Moore, 2002; Mintrop, 2001; Naylor & Keogh, 1999; Tatto, 1998).

Furthermore, there is a distinct dissonance between university teacher education classrooms and field based classrooms where preservice teachers practice, often socioconstructivist lessons are not clearly defined or welcome (Cook et al., 2002; Kaufman, 1996).

As both socioconstructivist pedagogy and historical thinking strengthens and their use increases in classrooms (in K-12 and post-secondary education), investigating their adoption in university coursework for preservice teachers becomes a practical matter of curriculum and coursework development. Bohan and Davis (1998) emphasize, “Preparation of history teachers to be able to understand and to perform this role [of using historical thinking in the classroom], therefore, is critical” (p. 174). Further, as preservice teachers become more familiar with the concepts, assessing their use and understanding of socioconstructivist principles and pedagogy during their professional development sequence only makes sense.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions for this dissertation focus on the preservice teacher’s understanding and implementation of historical thinking and the subsequent adoption of socioconstructivist principles. More specifically:

- 1) How do preservice teachers understand historical thinking and the socioconstructivist principles that foster it?
- 2) What are preservice teachers’ experiences with historical thinking and socioconstructivist lessons in the classroom?

DESIGN AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This dissertation employs qualitative case study research in order to uncover some possible understandings of the questions previously outlined. Four preservice teachers will be involved as participants in this study; two students are apprentice teaching at the high school level, and two are conducting their apprentice teaching at the middle school level. The data to be collected consists of interviews, observations, and artifacts related to the case. Data will be analyzed simultaneously with collection and the result will be a narrative text describing the experiences of the preservice teachers with historical thinking and socioconstructivist pedagogy.

SUMMARY

Chapter I provides a rationale for the use of socioconstructivist pedagogy in classrooms and the accompanying research questions on preservice teacher understanding and use of historical thinking and socioconstructivist principles. Also provided is a brief discussion of the case study methodology involved in this dissertation. Chapters II and III describe in detail the conceptual framework for this dissertation as well as details of the research methodology.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The philosophical and educational foundations of socioconstructivism and its development as a pedagogical tool are examined in this study through the technique of historical thinking. Chapter II provides a review of the foundations and development of socioconstructivist theory and related modern theorizing of socioconstructivism and resulting pedagogical practice; and finally, this chapter outlines parallels that connect socioconstructivism and historical thinking.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIOCONSTRUCTIVIST THOUGHT

Fosnot (2005) urges the transition of traditional classrooms into socioconstructivist learning environments --using socioconstructivist principles based on what is known about how students learn and the nature of knowledge,

Too often teaching strategies and procedures seem to spring from the naïve assumption that what we ourselves perceive and infer from our perceptions is there, ready-made, for the students to pick up, if only they had the will to do so. This overlooks the basic point that the way we segment the flow of our experience, and the way we related the pieces we have isolated, is and necessarily remains an essentially subjective matter. Hence, when we intend to stimulate and enhance a student's learning, we cannot afford to forget that knowledge does not exist outside a person's mind. (p. 5)

In order to understand fully socioconstructivist frameworks in an educational sense, the epistemological assumptions of constructionism must be examined. According to Crotty (2003), constructionism as a paradigm maintains a subjective reality, "...the world and objects in the world are indeterminate. They may be pregnant with potential meaning, but actual meaning emerges only when consciousness engages with them. How, such thinkers ask, can there be meaning without a mind?" It is as if the world does not actually exist without human interaction; people, in fact, create and impose meaning upon it through their interaction with the world and its objects. Crotty further illustrates,

...it is the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context. (p. 42)

In the constructionist sense, knowledge is not a collection of information simply there for the asking or the taking; interaction or engagement is essential to generating the knowledge. Von Glasersfeld (1987) explains the critical role that human engagement plays in the development and use of knowledge. The world we live in, from the vantage point of this perspective, is always and necessarily the world as we conceptualize it.

“Facts,” ...are *made* by us and our way of experiencing, rather than *given* by an independently existing objective world. But that does not mean that we can make them as we like. They are viable facts as long as they do not clash with experience, as long as they remain tenable in the sense that they continue to do what we expect them to do. This view of knowledge, clearly, has serious consequences for our conceptualization of teaching and learning. (pp. 5-6)

Further, von Glasersfeld (1987) emphasizes that “viable” knowledge is key; and in keeping with the constructionist paradigm, there is no correct form of knowledge, and the discovery of a single truth is impossible. Rather, if the knowledge that a learner constructs fits within his or her individual experiences, it is considered germane. If a learner’s new knowledge contradicts his or her experience, then new knowledge construction or adjustment is required to obtain a new fit. Following this paradigm, the

knowledge is not necessarily wrong; it is simply what the learner has constructed with available resources and/or prior knowledge.

Constructionism is considered to be in a category of its own in the organizational structure of epistemological types (distinct from positivist, critical, and post-modern epistemologies). As such, it deeply affects the development of educational thought including theoretical assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge, how students learn, the purpose of schooling, and the design of daily lessons. Fosnot and Perry (2005) describe constructivist goals:

[they are] fundamentally nonpositivist and as such it stands on completely new ground, often in direct opposition to both behaviorism and maturationism. Rather than behaviors or skills as the goals of instruction, *cognitive development* and *deep understanding* are the foci; rather than stages being the result of maturation, they are understood as *constructions of active learner reorganization*. Rather than viewing learning as a linear process, it is understood to be *complex* and fundamentally *nonlinear* in nature. (p. 10-11).

The constructionist paradigm and its treatment of knowledge is utilized by the fields of psychology, educational psychology and philosophy, and education to shape the learning theory called socioconstructivism -- developed primarily as a learning theory. Vygotsky tapped this mode of thinking and as Karpov (2003), argues socioconstructivism might be better described in terms of what it is not, as compared to other ideas about learning and teaching,

“...human mental processes neither are developed in the course of children’s independent activity (as constructivists would hold), nor ‘unfold’ as a result of maturation (as nativists would hold), nor are inculcated into children by adults (as behaviorists would hold). The development of mental processes in each period of the child’s life is determined by mediation in the context of the specific to the given period relationships between children and their social environment. (p. 139)

Based on the process of deduction, the socioconstructivist paradigm rejects notions from other previous conceptions of learning theories. While it carries some features of constructivism, socioconstructivism is a learning theory in its own right and significantly diverges from the concept of constructivism,

...to construct interpretations of ongoing events, actively making sense of language and life, the socioconstructivist perspective also includes the cultural/social/historical milieu into which every person is born and lives. From a socioconstructivist perspective, we attend to the cultural meaning of the situation in which learning is taking place and to the social practices and power differentials that influence teachers and learners in learning situations. (Schallert & Martin, 2003 p. 34)

While the terms constructionism, constructivism, and socioconstructivism are related and derived from similar concepts, they are, at times, used as vocabulary terms describing the same concept and at others used to describe discrete categories. The use of the terminology is often dependent upon the context of the research and the author’s belief

systems regarding constructivism. In this dissertation, “constructionism” refers to the interpretive epistemology, while “constructivism” denotes methodologies involving the learner’s construction of knowledge without regard to cultural context or the particular situation in which learning occurs, in this sense, constructivism is more internal and individual. Doolittle and Hicks (2003) provide an excellent summary delineating radical, social, and cognitive constructivism. Radical constructivism refers specifically to knowledge construction as a strictly internal process; social constructivism (also “socioconstructivism”) emphasizes social interaction as the source for knowledge construction; and cognitive constructivism engenders a positivistic slant (and might be dismissed from any categorization under constructivism) that views knowledge as externally existing, then re-structured internally by the learner. Moreover, they caution, “...the concept of ‘constructivism’ is diverse, with varied interpretations. This diversity necessitates that the asserting of constructivist claims be made with caution and significant forethought” (p. 81). The addition of the Vygotskian prefix “socio” to the term “constructivism” indicates the acknowledgement of cultural and contextual issues in learning situations as opposed to a strictly internal construction of knowledge referred to by the term “constructivism.” It is worthy to note that in the majority of literature using both constructivist and socioconstructivist notions, the term “constructivism” is used as an umbrella term, referring to both constructivist and socioconstructivist notions.

For the purposes of this dissertation, the term “socioconstructivism” will be used instead of the more general term “constructivism” with the intent of taking advantage of its definition previously stated. The specific elements of socioconstructivism, which differentiate it from constructivism, that is, the social and cultural factors present in all

learning situations, are key in this study. Throughout the dissertation, various authors' original use of the various terminology (constructivism, social constructivism, socioconstructivism, etc.) remains in citations and references to their work.

DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOCONSTRUCTIVISM

Vygotsky's learning theory -- called sociocultural history -- was originally developed in Russia during revolutionary social upheaval through his work with literature, psychology, and defectology. Vygotsky's learning theory was heavily influenced by Marxist thought and may be understood in three parts:

1) a reliance on a genetic or developmental method, 2) the claim that higher mental processes in the individual have their origin in social processes, and 3) the claim that mental processes can be understood only if we understand the tools and signs that mediate them. (Wertsch, 1985 pp. 14-15)

Further, Vygotsky's approach to child development is bi-fold in terms of development: 1) physical-- the normal processes of growth and maturation; and 2) cultural -- the mastery of cultural tools, with speech and language as a fundamental tool of mediation in learning situations (van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). Language as a cultural tool is a central theme in Vygotsky's sociocultural history as it provides the primary means with which two persons engage in dialogue, and the construction of knowledge follows. The following describes Vygotsky and his efforts:

[He was] not only a psychologist but a cultural theorist, a scholar deeply committed to understanding not simply Man, conceived as a solo

‘organism,’ but Man as an expression of human culture....his educational theory is a theory of cultural transmission as well as a theory of development... [and] for him, the heart of the matter is the interaction between man and his tools, particularly the symbolic tool of language. (Reiber & Carton, 1987 pp. 1-2)

One of the most widely known concepts that Vygotsky (1978) offers educators is the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Chaiklin, 2004), Vygotsky defines ZPD as, “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). Rather, “...what is in the zone of proximal development today will be the actual development level tomorrow -- that is, what a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow” (p. 87). Through the concept of ZPD -- Vygotsky determines that learning precedes development. Students must engage with material that consistently maintains engagement within the ZPD so that development will proceed without lapse. If a student works with learning material that is too simple or too difficult, or the adult or near peer does not mediate the learning activity adequately then development does not occur and frustration often occurs. Fosnot and Perry (2005) offer further clarity on Vygotsky’s view of the ZPD by explaining it as a place where a student’s “spontaneous concepts” work their way “up” to meet an adult’s (or near peer’s) “scientific concepts” working their way “down” within this ZPD (p. 23). Logic is imposed and accepted in this dialogic interaction. According to Smagorinsky, Cook and

Johnson (2003), spontaneous concepts are learned through cultural practice and scientific concepts are learned through formal instruction.

Further, the ZPD is social in nature -- in keeping with Vygotsky's sociocultural history theory,

...an essential feature of learning is that it creates the zone of proximal development; that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90)

Termed "social situation of development" the learners experience a contradiction between current abilities, individual interests, and what the environment will afford. They then engage in learning activities to resolve such contradictions thereby continuing the development of any given internal function or creating new functions to cope with the situation (Chaiklin, 2004, p. 47).

By using elements of the ZPD, educators are provided an important tool to assist students at their appropriate learning and developmental levels. Then, as students increase their developmental levels, the creation of dialogue between a novice and an expert occurs that then leads to an inner dialogue. Vygotsky labels this phenomena inner speech which is a component of deep understanding of the material (Reiber & Carton, 1987).

Mediation is also a critical part of Vygotsky's model as an opposite response to previous theories of acquisition (Kozulin, 2003). The learner must apply psychological tools found in the environment to the process of mediation in order to achieve higher mental development. Such tools, according to Kozulin, were established by Vygotsky as part of formal education (symbolic artifacts such as signs, symbols, texts, formulae, graphic organizers) but they may also include other human beings or organized learning activities like scaffolding or apprenticeship models.

Both the ZPD and mediation make up essential elements of Vygotsky's work. "Paedology, according to him, is primarily interested in the ways in which the hereditary bases of development and actual life-course experiences of the children become integrated" (van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991 p. 312). While Vygotsky was a psychologist, his work late in his life turned to using his sociocultural history construct in a pedagogical sense focusing on language and social interaction in classroom learning situations. Strengthening Vygotsky's knowledge construction are the ideas of philosopher John Dewey whose curricular contributions provide another context in which to consider Vygotskian notions --further clarifying socioconstructivist thought.

Dewey's work is a departure from Vygotsky in that his background and formal education was in philosophy, not psychology. Dewey's child-centered views were guided by his goal for education, "The process of leading the child from present interests to an intellectual command of the modern world, however, remained for Dewey a controlling purpose, and the critical problem was to construct a curriculum that best facilitated that process" (Kliebard, 1986 p. 63). Dewey emphasized the role of the student in the

educational process. The role of the teacher is to facilitate learning and guide the student through a rigorous academic routine that matches both individual inclination and ability.

Dewey's curriculum centered on occupations -- natural human activities -- within which he taught advanced academic subjects and guided students from concrete subjects to abstract ideas -- which may be considered where Vygotsky's spontaneous and scientific concepts meet. "An experience is educative, Dewey insisted, if it increases the quality of one's interactions with important objects and events in the immediate environment and lays the groundwork for even more expansive interactions in the future" (Prawat, 2000 p. 806). Dewey's model consisted of experiential education, wherein students are presented with realistic events or problems in which they are guided through the learning process of materials and subjects needed to solve the problem or understand the event.

If in fact, the situation appeals to their interests and needs, and is not too daunting, all the ingredients for a Deweyan "teachable moment" are present. When one lacks the cognitive wherewithal to deal with a new, inviting situation, it creates a state of disequilibrium. The need to alleviate this discomfort provides the incentive necessary for the 'real' learning to occur. (Prawat, 2000 p. 806)

This "real learning" may be likened to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. Dewey's (1897) aim was to develop a rigorous curriculum that would best take advantage of, or frequently create "teachable moments." His most pointed writing of his beliefs on education is contained in his piece entitled "My Pedagogic Creed." Dewey outlines his

perspective on education overall -- schools, subject matter, methodology, and social progress -- as it relates to the school. Elements that are characterized today as socioconstructivist are evident from selections from the Creed:

- I believe that the only true education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself.
- Education, therefore, must begin with a psychological insight into the child's capacities, interests, and habits.
- The teacher is not in the school to impose certain ideas or to form certain habits in the child, but is there as a member of the community to select the influences which shall affect the child and to assist him in properly responding to these influences.
- I believe, finally, that education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience; that the process and goal of education are one and the same thing.
- I believe that the question of method is ultimately reducible to the question of the order of development of the child's powers and interests.
- I believe that education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform. (Dewey, 1897, pp. 77-80)

Educators in present times continue to benefit from century-old efforts developed by Vygotsky, Dewey and others who informed their thinking. As educators continue to research new or improved learning theories and pedagogical practices, the work and ideas of these men is regularly called upon to inform current perspectives on socioconstructivism.

SOCIOCONSTRUCTIVIST PEDAGOGY

Socioconstructivism may be traced from its grounding roots in philosophy, through various theoretical tenets and conceptions and, finally, to its practical use in the classroom by teachers and students. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, socioconstructivist thought has developed and become accepted as a viable learning theory -- ripe for adaptation to pedagogical principles (Fosnot, 2005; Richardson, 2003).

Given the long and complex derivation of socioconstructivism as a learning theory, one may be content with leaving it at that -- a learning theory. However, satisfied in the establishment of firm psychological and philosophical foundations, scholars continue to seek translation of socioconstructivist frameworks from a learning theory to pedagogical practice; recently (in the last decade), formal socioconstructivist pedagogical systems and techniques have emerged and are gaining credibility as the number of empirical studies increase in number and rigor (Richardson, 2003).

As such, Richardson (2003) provides a summary of pedagogical practice that makes up the characteristics necessary for the classification of a learning situation as “constructivist” – or rather “socioconstructivist.” They include the following:

1. attention to the individual and respect for students' background and developing understandings of and beliefs about elements of the domain (this could also be described as student-centered);
2. facilitation of group dialogue that explores an element of the domain with the purpose of leading to the creation and shared understanding of a topic;
3. planned and often unplanned introduction of formal domain knowledge into the conversation through direct instruction, reference to text, exploration of a Web site, or some other means.
4. provision of opportunities for students to determine, challenge, change or add to existing beliefs and understandings through engagement in tasks that are structured for this purpose; and
5. development of students' metawareness of their own understandings and learning processes. (p. 1626)

The characteristics provide guidelines for the practical use of socioconstructivism in the classroom, both in identifying and developing socioconstructivist learning situations and lessons. This is a helpful step towards establishing a strong socioconstructivist pedagogical framework.

In addition to Richardson's (2003) work, Fosnot (2005) provides a comprehensive definition of socioconstructivism and socioconstructivist teaching. Her definition of socioconstructivism follows:

Based on work in psychology, philosophy, science, and biology, the theory describes knowledge not as truths to be transmitted or discovered, but as emergent, developmental, nonobjective, viable constructed explanations by humans engaged in meaning-making cultural and social communities of discourse. Learning from this perspective is viewed as a self-regulatory process of struggling with the conflict between existing personal models of reality as a human meaning-making venture with culturally developed tools and symbols, and further negotiating such meaning through cooperative social activity, discourse, and debate in communities of practice. (p. ix)

Fosnot (2005) also provides insight to the schism between learning theory and pedagogy noting that, in the past, constructivist theory has been misunderstood, misused, and attacked but that current conceptions reflect better understanding and have paved the way for application as a pedagogical theory (p. x). Her constructivist (or “socioconstructivist” as suggested by the inclusion of community in the definition) view of learning suggests:

an approach to teaching that gives learners the opportunity for concrete, contextually meaningful experience through which they can search for patterns; raise questions; and model, interpret, and defend their strategies and ideas. The classroom in this model is seen as a mini-society, a community of learners engaged in activity, discourse, interpretation, justification, and reflection. (p. ix).

As socioconstructivist pedagogy becomes more developed, socioconstructivism becomes easier to identify in classrooms and lessons. One such area is the technique of historical thinking, a methodology used by professional historians that has been adapted for classroom use by the social studies field (Davis, 1998; Grant, 2003; VanSledright, 2002; Wineburg, 2001).

PREMISES OF HISTORICAL THINKING

Historical thinking provides opportunity to practice socioconstructivist pedagogy. Like socioconstructivism, historical thinking has increased in use and visibility in the past decade (Spoehr & Spoehr, 1994; VanSledright, 2004; Wineburg, 2001). Wineburg (2001) calls for engagement in historical thinking in a global sense,

...we are all called on to engage in historical thinking -- called on to see human motive in the texts we read; called on to mine truth from the quicksand of innuendo, half-truth, and falsehood that seeks to engulf us each day; called on to brave the fact that certainty, at least in understanding the social world, remains elusive and beyond our grasp....school history possesses great potential for teaching students to think and reason in sophisticated ways. (p. 83)

Supporting this position are the National Standards for History (National Council for History Standards, 1996), and Texas state curriculum guides (Texas Education Agency, 1998) as necessary elements of learning in history classrooms, from Kindergarten through 12th grade.

The study of history, as noted earlier, rests on knowledge of facts, dates, names, places, events, and ideas. In addition, true historical understanding requires students to engage in historical thinking: to raise questions and to marshal solid evidence in support of their answers; to go beyond the facts presented in their textbooks and examine the historical record for themselves; to consult documents, journals, diaries, artifacts, historic sites, works of art, quantitative data, and other evidence from the past, and to do so imaginatively--taking into account the historical context in which these records were created and comparing the multiple points of view of those on the scene at the time. (National Council for History Standards, 1996)

Summarized by Davis (1998), the standards for historical thinking, "...intend that students learn to derive warranted, substantive, historical knowledge and that they learn to communicate it in appropriate historical formats."

As with socioconstructivism, historical thinking is subject to multiple definitions and uses. Spoehr and Spoehr (1994) define historical thinking by the process of deduction, "thinking historically, in other words, does not call for accumulation, but discrimination and informed judgment" (p. 71). VanSledright (2004) points out that some say "the term [historical thinking] means different things to different people" (p. 230); but defines it himself as "sourcework" or the investigation and assessment of historical data. These investigations involve cognitive acts during the examination of primary sources that include the processes of identification, attribution, judging perspective, and reliability assessment, and are practiced by professional historians in the daily course of their work. VanSledright claims that students as young as seven years old can

successfully accomplish historical thinking and, with teacher assistance, high school students' work is as sophisticated as that of professional historians (p. 230-231).

Seixas (1993) similarly analyzes students' historical thinking using the following categories: historical significance -- the ability to select events of importance using factual knowledge and criteria; historical epistemology -- the ability to "refine, revise, and add to their picture of history, either through new evidence or through reliance on historical authorities" (p. 303); historical agency, or, understanding the choices made under particular constraints by those in the past and the consequences thereof; historical empathy -- the understanding that historical contexts are much different from their own and engaging in historical thinking without being hampered by presentism; and moral judgment, making judgments about past events ranging from individual issues to judgments of historical progress and decline. Further, Seixas argues that historical thinking is an ongoing learning process that is influenced greatly by family knowledge, or knowledge generated by familial experiences and maintained by family stories; some may consider it in socioconstructivist terms as prior knowledge.

An additional benefit of the use of historical thinking is the expansion of traditional historical topics to a more diverse and inclusive body of knowledge. "In understanding history as a thought process first [historical thinking] and as a body of data second, historians have expanded the domain of inquiry beyond the boundaries of elite culture and those with power" (Staley, 2002, p. 73). VanSledright and Afflerbach (2000) and Wineburg (2001) find the use of historical thinking a powerful tool to interrupt the standard, celebratory history narrative with which most preservice teachers are familiar --

and espouse other viewpoints in order to present a more diverse and accurate account of historical events as well as to develop a sense of empathy.

...prospective teachers as readers will develop the sort of critical reading acumen that exemplifies the way historians, for example, read and understand the past. This in turn, will nurture receptivity to multiple points of view and help produce empathy and tolerance, dispositions that later, proponents hope, will be translated into the classroom teaching practices of these prospective teachers. (VanSledright & Afflerbach, 2000, p. 438)

An additional and important connection between socioconstructivist theory and historical thinking is the use of document-based questions (DBQ's) as a mediator used to support student development of higher order thinking. DBQ's, as described by VanSledright (2002) have been used on the Advanced Placement (AP) exam for many years as an assessment tool; they are also an excellent classroom tool as an organized learning activity. DBQ's act as mediation tools according to Vygotskian terms. Kozulin (2003) emphasizes the specialized nature of appropriating psychological tools -- or engaging in mediation via language,

content material often reproduces empirical realities with which students become acquainted in everyday life, psychological tools can be acquired only in the course of special learning activities....This learning paradigm presupposes (a) a deliberate, rather than spontaneous character of the learning process; (b) systemic acquisition of symbolic tools, because they

themselves are systematically organized; (c) emphasis on the generalized nature of symbolic tools and their application. (p. 25)

While DBQ's may differ in topic based upon various types of primary source material -- they are specifically designed to prompt students' critical thinking and investigation of primary source material. They are an important technique in the classroom use of historical thinking. VanSledright (2002), in his study of fifth graders and historical thinking analyzes their use of primary source material using the following critique:

Global reading strategies: Level 1: Vocalization Type: Comprehension

Monitoring Strategies (CMS)

- Checking/pointing out details
- Rereading portions of document/image
- Questioning the document/image
- Summarizing about a document passage or image depiction
- Predicting/infering about a document/author purpose
- Checking fit with understanding or lack thereof

Global reading strategies: Level 2: Vocalization Type: Intratextual

Evaluations (IAE)

- Judging who characters are and actions in text/image
- Assessing text language/image depiction effectively

- Judging whether the text/image makes sense
- Questioning/evaluating the author/artist/title/caption (e.g. style, syntax, color)

History-specific reading strategies: Level 3: Vocalization Type: Event
Knowledge Accretion (EKA)

- Checking where source(s) come(s) from, identifying the nature of a source(s) relative to other sources
- Corroborating/checking details against those gleaned from other accounts/images, using account to add to knowledge of event, checking fit of details from one document/image to another
- Building an initial interpretation from accreted knowledge

History-specific reading strategies: Level 4: Vocalization Type: Critical
Intertextual Evaluations (CIEE)

- Judging validity and reliability of source vis-à-vis other sources
- Assessing and judging the subtext against other subtexts
- Assessing actions/intentions of the historical agents with respect to other accounts
- Testing and refining the interpretation (p. 164)

VanSledright's (2002) work provides a format for analysis of the use of DBQ's in the classroom and provides structure for the use of this mediation tool

Supported by positive views of historical thinking, efforts to transform traditional history classrooms via historical thinking are ever increasing despite systematic difficulties such as standardized testing, the belief that students -- particularly younger students -- cannot engage in such a high level academic endeavor such as historical thinking, the growing number of poorly funded and staffed diverse urban schools, and the continued debate over subject matter and its breadth and depth (VanSledright, 2002, p.14, 22).

HISTORICAL THINKING AS A SOCIOCONSTRUCTIVIST PEDAGOGICAL METHODOLOGY

“The important question to be asked is not whether the cognizing individual or the culture should be given priority in an analysis of learning, but instead, What is the interplay between them?” (Fosnot & Perry, 2005, p. 28) Vygotsky's original interest was in exploring the “integration of development and experience” as he placed emphasis on the social and cultural context in which knowledge construction takes place. It is precisely within this interplay that historical thinking is revealed as a socioconstructivist concept. The use of socioconstructivism in the social studies, “...changes the nature of the social studies from one of a search for *truth*, to one of a search for *perspective*” (Doolittle & Hicks, 2003, p. 77).

VanSledright (2002) writes of “a pragmatist's epistemological stance” (p. 144). This phrase refers to the concept of interpreting the past and VanSledright contests that,

a pragmatist's epistemology acknowledges this tension, the unbridgeable divide that separates a reality back then from our interpretations of it now....This requires us to see history as a set of stories we construct and tell -- and continually re-construct and retell -- about who we were and how they define who we see ourselves as now. They are the tales that then enable us to project who we might be tomorrow. (p. 144-145)

One of the primary purposes of socioconstructivist pedagogical principles is to provide a learning environment in which students learn transferable knowledge -- that is, knowledge that may be applied to multiple experiences in a holistic sense. Karpov (2003), concludes that *both* procedural and conceptual knowledge -- known in Vygotskian terms as scientific knowledge --are worthwhile goals for student learning, otherwise, students acquire a large amount of random knowledge as well as useless procedures (p. 68-69), "rote skills are meaningless and nontransferable, and pure verbal knowledge is inert" (p. 70). He argues for this combination to promote, "a high level of mastery, broad transfer, and intentional use by students" (p. 69). The term theoretical learning is the term that characterizes this purposeful endeavor (guided by teachers or more knowledgeable others) to provide students with meaningful education (as opposed to empirical learning, which is characterized by students' unsuccessful attempts in learning often resulting in incorrect notions, wrong answers, and development of spontaneous concepts) (p. 70-71).

In examining socioconstructivist learning theory, experiential education, its related pedagogical principles, and historical thinking, one may draw many parallels between the two. These parallels are drawn in such a close manner that historical thinking

may be labeled a socioconstructivist pedagogical technique both in purpose and in practice.

The overarching purpose in each concept -- socioconstructivism and historical thinking -- lies in the holistic nature of learning and transferability of knowledge used to develop students as well-rounded individuals and contributing members of their communities. Sociocultural history seeks to develop children's thought processes so that they may function at high levels in society; likewise, experiential education calls for curriculum that prepares students for success and future responsibilities. Socioconstructivist pedagogy provides rigorous and interesting learning experiences so that students learn relevant, transferable knowledge and skills. Finally, historical thinking seeks to develop critical thinking skills and emphasizes applicability of these skills to other topics and subject areas.

Similar practices include use of the zone of proximal development, use of "teachable moments," and developmentally appropriate material, with the teacher as facilitator. Mediation plays a significant role in learning as well as an emphasis on contextuality. In each area, the linking of experience and formal instruction is evident as well as the focus on student individuality and his/her location within the group. The social or situational context and a student's prior knowledge are important elements in each construct. Learning centers on relevant material, informal and formal knowledge. Finally, each theoretical base or pedagogy acknowledges and benefits from the concept of knowledge as a constructed entity.

A learner's prior knowledge is a critical element of socioconstructivism (Richardson, 2003) and is a powerful factor in student learning -- either as a help or a hindrance -- to extending and building knowledge. Seixas (1994) and Wineburg (2001) both assert the importance of prior knowledge with historical thinking, particularly with preservice teachers. By explicitly assessing their own and student preconceptions of historical topics, preservice teachers gain deeper understanding of how to proceed with appropriate lessons. "Learning is not merely an encounter with new information, for new information is often no match for deeply held beliefs" (Wineburg, 2001, p. 153).

As the four elements are drawn together, their underlying principles and functions are complementary, "History teaching is a co-investigation in which the teacher and students shape and reshape their interpretations about the past" (Drake & Brown, 2003, p. 471)

SUMMARY

This chapter discusses a selection of major elements of socioconstructivist thought as related to education today. Socioconstructivist principles are currently championed by many education professionals; they believe in its student-centered orientation and its ability to elicit meaningful learning. Moreover, socioconstructivism, with its emphasis on knowledge construction, is considered to foster democratic learning situations where individuality and culture are supported. At the same time that present-day educators support socioconstructivist thought and its future development, it is important to remember that socioconstructivism is a well-established theoretical concept and learning theory. The true origins of socioconstructivism lie in constructionist epistemology and the philosophy of knowledge with the assumption that all knowledge is created via engagement with the human mind. Through an examination and review of socioconstructivism, Richardson (2003) provides clarity in the current state of socioconstructivist pedagogy in schools as well as a five-point list of socioconstructivist characteristics, commensurate with Fosnot and Perry's (2005) conception of socioconstructivist pedagogy to utilize in classrooms.

A specific manifestation of socioconstructivist pedagogy is identified in the technique of historical thinking, defined as a manner of contextualizing and thoughtfully examining historical events and characters with multiple lenses. Historical thinking, originally created and used by professional historians, is a powerful tool in the social studies classroom for students to develop critical thinking skills and diverse views of historical events by using primary source material and other investigative activities. Both Seixas (1993) and VanSledright (2004) provide detailed outlines to assist teachers in

using and teaching elements of historical thinking to students, these outlines include the use of primary source material and document-based questions (DBQ;s). Doolittle and Hicks (2003) emphasize that historical studies should not seek “truth” but rather “perspective” – an outlook that places historical thinking in alignment with socioconstructivist practice. Further, the “pragmatist’s epistemological stance” (VanSledright, 2002) emphasizes the construction and re-construction of historical knowledge to define who we are and who we will be in the future.

Connections between socioconstructivist pedagogy and historical thinking may also be found in the purpose of knowledge and learning. Both constructs emphasize both popular and theoretical knowledge as well as the need for learning to be relevant, engaging, and to prepare students for active participation in the community.

In sum, socioconstructivism presents itself as a powerful and complex learning theory that is useful as a foundation for developing pedagogical practice, such as historical thinking, by educators. The multiple benefits of pursuing socioconstructivist principles in the classroom, such as improved student learning of academic material and social interaction, embracing culture and diversity, and authentic assessment outweigh drawbacks that have yet to be resolved as in the design of a cohesive pedagogical framework utilizing socioconstructivism. The examination of historical thinking, an established pedagogical practice, and socioconstructivist principles may prove to be one manner of highlighting and understanding the continuum between theory and practice.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A natural fit emerges in case study for a study exploring the nature of socioconstructivism to be conducted from within the interpretive/constructivist paradigm. According to Merriam, (1998) “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meanings people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 6). This dissertation seeks greater understanding of preservice teachers’ use and conception of -- or their experiences with -- socioconstructivist principles via the practice of historical thinking in the classroom.

The process of investigating uses of historical thinking and subsequent understanding of socioconstructivist principles by preservice teachers is best accomplished as an interpretive task utilizing case study methodology and its related techniques as the research framework. Further, mindful attention will be directed toward the rigor and trustworthiness of the research design, its implementation, and the processes thereof.

The following chapter details the methods and process of the study discussing design and conceptual framework, research methodology, data collection and analysis, context of the study and its participants (including researcher positionality), and limitations of the study, concluding with the study timeline and process.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The interpretive nature of this dissertation is grounded in the field of qualitative research and, as defined by Denzin and Lincoln, (2005) qualitative research is characterized as:

a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

The hope is that by making “visible” the realm of preservice teachers’ efforts to implement historical thinking as a socioconstructivist pedagogical technique, their understandings, or misunderstandings, of socioconstructivism will become apparent. Qualitative research seek(s), “answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 10). The question remains: What is the understanding of historical thinking and socioconstructivism of preservice teachers?

Most importantly, qualitative research offers the opportunity to explore the directions that the participants and their experiences may take as well as to gain deeper understanding through natural interaction. “Being open to any possibility can lead to

serendipitous discoveries” (Merriam, 1998, p. 121). Further, as Stake (1995) points out, qualitative researchers, “...are trying to remain open to the nuances of increasing complexity” (p. 21) thus affording the opportunity to optimize the concept of “progressive focusing” (Huberman & Miles, 1983; Stake, 1994). As data and themes emerge throughout the course of the study, the “organizing concepts change somewhat as the study moves along” (Stake, 1995, p. 133).

The design of this study is meant to provide guidance in accomplishing the following characteristics of quality qualitative research as outlined by Garman (1994):

- verity (intellectual authenticity)
- integrity (structural soundness)
- rigor (depth of intellect)
- utility (professional usefulness)
- vitality (meaningfulness)
- aesthetics (enrichment)
- ethics (consideration of dignity and privacy of participants)
- verisimilitude (sufficient detail to warrant transferability)

As the research progresses, attention will turn and return to these elements to maintain steady progress thus avoiding the traps of tangents, irrelevance, data mismanagement or disorganization, shallow interpretation, bias, and weak analysis.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Four major educational theories or constructs make up the framework for this study, 1) Vygotsky’s sociocultural history (Chaiklin, 2004; Karpov, 2003; Reiber & Carton, 1987; van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985), 2)

Dewey's progressive education (Dewey, 1897, 1998), 3) emerging socioconstructivist pedagogy (Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Richardson, 2003), and 4) historical thinking (Davis, 1998; VanSledright, 2002; Wineburg, 2001).

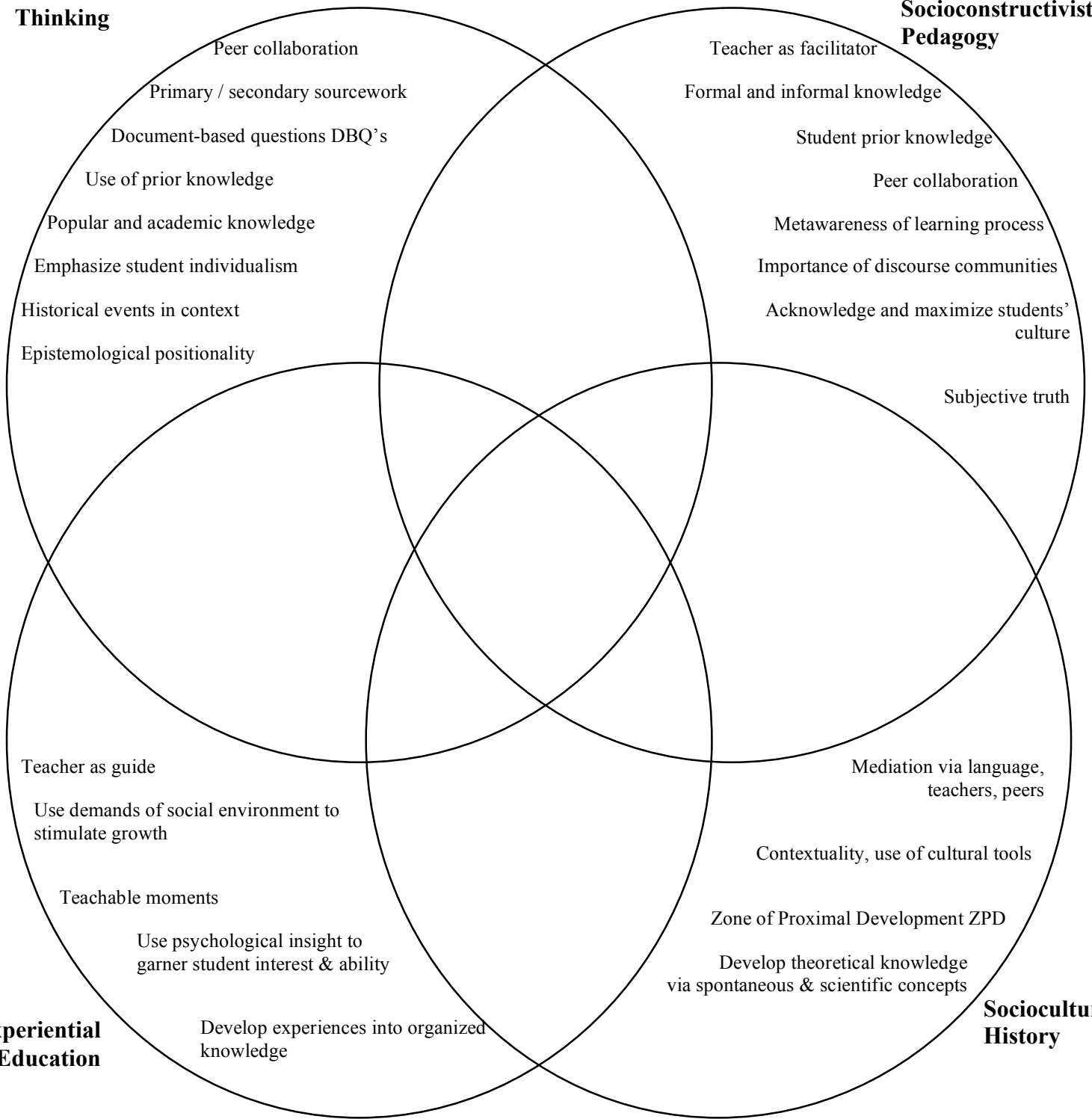
These four elements combine learning theory, curriculum theory and pedagogical tools and technique. The design of this study includes the conceptual framework intertwined in such a way as to be interdependent; at times one particular framework is primary, and at other times, a different framework takes the forefront. As discussed as a montage by Denzin and Lincoln (2005),

In montage, several different images are juxtaposed to or superimposed on one another to create a picture. In a sense, montage is like *pentimento*, in which something that has been painted out of a picture (an image the painter "repented" or denied) becomes visible again, creating something new. What is new is what had been obscured by a previous image. (p. 4).

While laying out the conceptual framework in a linear fashion eases explanation, the lines simplify the theories so that they lose their complex and interconnected meaning in the simplicity of the drawing. The research methodology detailed in the forthcoming section is designed to investigate closely the relationships between and among these elements as preservice teachers begin their work as full time classroom teachers.

Historical Thinking

Socioconstructivist Pedagogy



Experiential Education

Sociocultural History

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY – CASE STUDY

This dissertation employs qualitative case study research as defined by Merriam (1998), “A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon” (p. xiii); and Yin (2003) who provides more specific boundaries for case study. It is an empirical inquiry that,

- 1) investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident;
- 2) copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points: and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion; and as another result, benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (p. 13-14)

This case study is bounded by several contexts, the preservice teachers themselves and their experiences as students and beginning teachers, their teaching assignment, campus, and fieldwork, and their work on the university campus. The study is situated within these interlocking contexts. Through qualitative research techniques, the relationships and resulting interactions between these contexts, socioconstructivist principles, and historical thinking by preservice teachers will be uncovered. These experiences facilitate or hinder the understanding of historical thinking and socioconstructivism by the preservice teachers and give it meaning. These are the outermost boundaries for this study.

More specifically than general case study, this dissertation may be considered multiple-case study (Yin, 2003) or a collective case study (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995) as there will be four to eight preservice teachers participating in the research. Stake (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995) notes that a case study is,

Singular, but it has subsections (e.g. production, marketing, sales departments), groups (e.g. students, teachers, parents), occasions (e.g. workdays, holidays, days near holidays), a concatenation of domains – many so complex that at best they can only be sampled. Holistic case study calls for the examination of these complexities.” (p. 239).

The case study is written in narrative form and is primarily concerned with providing the reader with insight and understanding of the unique case or situation, according to Stake (1995), “Qualitative research tries to establish an empathetic understanding for the reader, through description, sometimes *thick description*, conveying to the reader what the experience itself would convey” (p. 39). The outcome of a rich narrative text describing the experience of the preservice teachers with historical thinking and socioconstructivism is dependent upon organized, flexible, and careful data collection.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection will occur during the Fall of 2005. All data gathered from participant resources will be collected with explicit permission from the participants and in full compliance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines.

In accordance with qualitative research tradition (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003), multiple data sources will be collected. Data

used in this dissertation is organized into four sets: the primary set is made up of interview data, which will comprise approximately three one-hour audio semi-structured interviews. This interview data will be triangulated by the following: 1) participant artifacts (lesson plans, classroom materials, personal reflection papers, and student work), observations, and field notes (a minimum of five, one-hour field-based observations); 2) professor interviews, syllabi, audio-taped class sessions, and university coursework materials; and 3) other resources including copies of district and state lesson design guidelines (Texas Essential Skills and Knowledge – TEKS, Instructional Planning Guides (IPG)), and national curriculum standards.

The use of interviews and observations are commonplace in qualitative case study research, (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Fontana & Frey, 1994; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1994, 1995; Yin, 2003). They are one manner of obtaining an insider, or emic, perspective regarding the issues being studied.

The interaction between researcher and participant through the interview is, “the establishment of human-to-human relation with the respondent and the desire to *understand* rather than to *explain*” (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 366). Interviews with the participants will be semi-structured; this provides for consistent investigation of particular topics with the participant and basic introductory questions, but also affords flexibility to engage in natural conversation that provides deeper insight,

This makes the interview more honest, morally sound, and reliable, because it treats the respondent as an equal, allows him or her to express personal feelings, and therefore presents a more “realistic” picture than

can be uncovered using traditional interview methods. (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 371)

Moreover, Merriam (1998), notes that highly structured interviews do not afford a true participant perspective, they simply, “get reactions to the *investigator’s* preconceived notions of the world” (p. 74). Also emphasized by Fontana and Frey (1994), is the observation and notation of body language and verification of shared meanings during the interview --it is important that the researcher and participant fully understand each other and the particulars of the conversation. These two elements contribute to the richness and integrity of the exchange.

Interviews will be audio taped and transcribed using digital media and provided to the participants for review and member checking. Member checking is generally considered an important method for verifying and validating information observed and / or transcribed by the researcher (Merriam, 1998; Mertens, 1998; Stake, 1995) and is meant as a check and critique of the data. Member checking also provides material for further investigation and triangulation, “They [the participants] also help triangulate the researcher’s observations and interpretations....The actor [participant] is asked to review the material for accuracy and palatability” (Stake, 1995, p. 115). Handwritten notes will be taken during the interviews for the purposes of extending questions or as the researcher’s personal notes for further investigation. The anticipation is that the interviews will be conducted on the university campus but accommodations will be made for participant’s schedules and interviews may be conducted on their school sites or after-hours.

Similar to interviews, observations must be conducted carefully with strict consideration for the research participants, as observations represent a “firsthand encounter with the phenomena of interest” (Merriam, 1998, p. 94). The role of the observer in this study will be an “observer-as-participant”, wherein the researcher has a peripheral membership in the group / context being observed (Adler & Adler, 1994). No formal, intentional interaction between the researcher, the participant and students will take place, but that the observer will be a friendly, knowledgeable outsider. The observer will select the least obtrusive location in the classroom from which to operate and will take notes on the actions of the preservice teacher, their interactions with students, lesson implementation, and other related contextual elements / events quietly on a laptop computer. Adler and Adler (1994) note that,

One of the hallmarks of observation has traditionally been its noninterventionism. Observers neither manipulate nor stimulate their subjects....Qualitative observation is fundamentally naturalistic in essence: it occurs in the natural context of occurrence, among the actors who would naturally be participating in the interaction, and follows the natural stream of everyday life. (p. 378)

The observational techniques to be employed will provide further insight to the preservice teachers’ use of historical thinking in the classroom with students as well as their notions of socioconstructivism.

Artifact collection is a less intrusive method of collecting data and will provide detail and evidence of corroboration or contradiction as compared to other collected data (Merriam, 1998), but Yin (2003) cautions that while gleaning material from artifacts,

researchers must recall that these artifacts were designed for purposes other than research and, therefore, they should use these sources judiciously.

The interview protocols (see Appendix A), observations, and artifact collection are designed to investigate further the central research questions as well as issues raised by the literature review, and finally, to facilitate data analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative case study research amasses huge amounts of raw data; therefore, it is essential to maintain the data in an organized and timely fashion (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Huberman & Miles, 1983; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1994, 1995; Yin, 2003). More importantly, preliminary data analysis must be conducted immediately post-collection or better yet, “the right way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to do it *simultaneously* with data collection” (Merriam, 1998, p. 162). Stake emphasizes, (1994) that data is continuously interpreted since qualitative research is inherently reflective, “in being ever reflective, the researcher is committed to pondering the impressions, deliberating recollections and records....data [is] sometimes precoded but continuously interpreted, on first sighting and again and again” (p. 242).

More specifically, Huberman and Miles (1983), outline a detailed procedure for data gathering and analysis -- aiding the simultaneous nature of the work:

- coding (organizing and theming data)
- policing (detecting bias and preventing tangents)
- dictating field notes (as opposed to verbatim recordings)
- connoisseurship (researcher knowledge of issues and context of the site)

- progressive focusing and funneling (winnowing data and investigative technique as study progresses)
- interim site summaries (narrative reviews of research progress)
- memoing (formal noting and sharing of emerging issues), and,
- outlining (standardized writing formats)

While these procedures were used in a large, multi-site study, research for this dissertation will utilize a similar format, making a few changes to accomplish a similar task for a smaller study with a single researcher. This particular data collection / analysis will substitute transcribed interviews and written field notes (either typed on a laptop computer or handwritten in a notebook) for the dictated field notes; and it will combine the elements of summaries, memos, and outlines into a reflective research journal kept by the researcher. These procedures will attempt to organize the data as it is collected; such procedures mark a fine line between data collection and analysis, thus easing the task of simultaneous collection and analysis.

After reviewing all the data sources, the materials (interview transcripts and follow-up notes, observation notes, and physical artifacts) will be manually coded and preliminary meaning generated from the interviews, observation field notes, and participant artifacts. As delineated by Miles and Huberman (1984), the data analysis will proceed from noting patterns and themes to arriving at comparisons and contrasts to determining conceptual explanations of the case study.

Triangulation of the multiple data sources is built into data collection and analysis for the purpose of achieving trustworthiness. “Triangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the

repeatability of an observation or interpretation...triangulation serves also to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen” (Stake, 1994, p. 241). Member checking is an important part of triangulating the researcher’s observations and interpretations. When research participants review interview transcripts, observation notes or narrative text they often provide corroboration and feedback (Stake, 1995). Each research participant will be given many opportunities to review data materials and provide further response to the research questions.

Yin (2003), provides the following four tenets of high quality analysis. The analysis must:

- 1) attend to *all the evidence*
- 2) address *all major rival interpretations*
- 3) address the *most significant aspect* of the case study, and,
- 4) utilize the researcher’s *prior expert knowledge*. (p. 137)

These four elements have been considered and built into the research study design and will be used to guide the data analysis and ensure its quality.

CONTEXT OF RESEARCH SITES

This study is situated at a large flagship university in the Southwest portion of the United States. The resident secondary teacher professional development sequence (PDS) requires special area coursework, in this instance, social studies. Fieldwork is essential as a significant program focus, preservice teachers divide their upper level coursework between field practice and university-based classes over two semesters. In the first semester of coursework, preservice teachers, known as interns, conduct 40 hours of classroom observations and eight full-length lessons. During the second semester, the

apprenticeship, the preservice teachers, called apprentices, are on school sites full time for sixteen weeks. They are expected to teach a full complement of courses and take on typical teacher responsibilities such as grading, attending faculty meetings, preparing material preparation, etc. In both semesters, the preservice teachers are matched with practicing professionals, the cooperating teachers, who serve as mentors and guides.

The university environment, faculty, and facilitators (those who function as teaching assistants and field work supervisors), both in coursework and in programmatic design support socioconstructivist principles; thus these pedagogic principles required of the preservice teachers are modeled and experienced as part of the advanced social studies coursework (Salinas, 2005a, 2005b).

The sites where fieldwork will be conducted are located in an urban school district within a central Texas city. The campus student bodies where the preservice teachers are placed are composed of a majority of Latina/o and African American students, with minimal White and Asian student populations. A large number of students on these campuses participate in the free/reduced lunch program, and overall, the campuses are characterized by a large percentage of students living in the low socioeconomic status (SES) category. Each school in this dissertation is identified by a pseudonym.

Two of the research participants are assigned to cooperating teachers at Pasmoso Middle School in the southern part of town. This school was constructed in 1998 and was home to 1,251 students in the 2003-04 school year. The student population is categorically described as 12.9% African American, 62.4% Hispanic, 22.6% White, .2% Native American, 1.9% Asian American/Pacific Islander. Furthermore, 59.3% of students

are classified as economically disadvantaged and 11.4% of the students are classified as having Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The school was rated academically acceptable during for the 2003-04 school year by the Texas Education Agency (Texas Education Agency, 2005). Educational initiatives such as Institute for Learning, Strategies for Success, Harry Wong materials, Professional Development and Appraisal System, TEKS for Leaders, Alternative Assessments, Interdisciplinary Units, Computer Integrated Instruction, PRIDE --An Advisory Program, Peer Mediation, Peer Assistance Leadership Program (PALS), Junior Achievement, and various Student Clubs are housed at Pasmoso MS (Austin Independent School District, 2005).

The third research participant is assigned to a cooperating teacher at Churchill High School, also in the southern part of town. This school was constructed in 1968 and was home to 1,964 students in the 2003-04 school year. The student population is categorically described as 9.1% African American, 53.3% Hispanic, 36% White, .3% Native American, 1.4% Asian American/Pacific Islander. Furthermore, 40.8% of students are classified as economically disadvantaged and 8% of the students are classified as having Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The graduation rate for the Class of 2003 was 84.2%. The school was rated academically acceptable during for the 2003-04 school year by the Texas Education Agency (Texas Education Agency, 2005). Educational initiatives include Automotive, Cosmetology, and Health Care Academy, and Culinary Arts courses are offered at Churchill HS. Additionally, dual H.S./College enrollment, Journalism, Honors, Gifted and Talented and AP courses, and Parents as Teachers programs are housed at Churchill HS (Austin Independent School District, 2005).

The fourth and final research participant is assigned to a cooperating teacher at Mark Twain High School, also in the southern part of town. This school was constructed in 1953 and was home to 1,619 students in the 2003-04 school year. The student population is categorically described as 9.8% African American, 81.1% Hispanic, 8.3% White, .1% Native American, .7% Asian American/Pacific Islander. Furthermore, 74.7% of students are classified as economically disadvantaged and 23.1% of the students are classified as having Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The graduation rate for the Class of 2003 was also 84.2% --as at Churchill HS. The school was rated academically acceptable during for the 2003-04 school year by the Texas Education Agency (Texas Education Agency, 2005). Educational initiatives include the Communications Academy, a Multimedia, Telecommunications and Teleproduction Program. Additionally, Freshman Transition Courses, Vertical Teaming, a Texas Education Agency Mentor School are housed at Mark Twain HS (Austin Independent School District, 2005).

Expectations are that each of these unique sites and the students attending these schools will bring unique properties and challenges to the research study. The research data, analysis, and presentation will reflect these aspects of the dissertation and, in particular, will highlight the interaction of these contexts with the implementation of historical thinking and use of socioconstructivist principles by the preservice teachers.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Four participants, all enrolled in the advanced undergraduate social studies methods course, have voluntarily agreed to participate. Currently, each of these four students has participated in the previously conducted pilot study and has indicated interest in continuing as a primary participant for this dissertation study.

The students, identified by pseudonyms, are purposefully selected based on their performance in university coursework, predicted success in a regular classroom as preservice teachers, and willingness to participate in the research. Purposeful sampling in case study research provides the researcher with the opportunity to select and learn from the most promising participants, “Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). For the purposes of this dissertation, the term “preservice teacher” describes those within approximately one year of graduation from the professional development sequence, and “cooperating teacher” refers to the teacher in whose classroom they are teaching during the apprentice semester; these teachers, too, are identified by pseudonym.

The first participant, Selena Favin, is Caucasian, 22-year-old, middle-school, preservice teacher. Her anticipated certification is Composite Social Studies Texas Middle School Teaching Certificate and she will graduate in December 2005 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History and Government. Her future educational plans include a master’s degree. She attended high school in a suburb north of Dallas, Texas; her coursework included Pre-Advanced Placement and Advanced Placement (AP) classes and one honors college history class (taken by accident, she says, but claims it was the best history class she has ever taken). She was exposed to historical thinking during her AP coursework, though it was not entitled “historical thinking.” She is a quiet and thoughtful student. Her lessons are creative and interesting and she invests a great deal of time in them. She is assigned to Caden Cagney at Pasmoso MS.

The second participant, Joshua Henson, is also a middle school preservice teacher. He is 21 years old and Caucasian and attended a magnet high school in Montgomery, Alabama where he was enrolled in AP History coursework which included work in historical thinking. Joshua will graduate in December 2005 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History and a Composite Social Studies Texas Middle School Teaching Certificate. He is quick to smile and his first moments with his students show that he enjoys his work immensely. He is assigned to Palesa Waite at Pasmoso MS.

The third participant, Bridget Keller, is a secondary preservice high school teacher. She is friendly and intelligent and speaks with care. She is a post-baccalaureate student and has slightly more life experiences than do some of her colleagues. She has already obtained her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Ancient History, Classical Civilization, and History. Her teaching certification will be a Secondary History Texas Teaching Certificate. She is 25 years old and Caucasian; she attended high school in both Missouri and Texas and was caught between different states' curriculum requirements and finished high school in regular history courses. She has used historical thinking during her various student teaching experiences. Assigned to Twain HS, her cooperating teacher is Cornelia Kaelem.

The fourth and final participant, Otón Longoria, is a secondary preservice high school teacher. His path through college is non-traditional as he completed an associate's degree at a two-year institution and worked in another field prior to entering the university to complete a philosophy degree in December 2005, thus he is slightly older than the average student is at age 30 -- but he does not look it. His teaching certification will be a Secondary Composite Social Studies Texas Teaching Certificate. He is

approachable and easy-going and is extremely creative in the classroom. Otón is assigned to Churchill High School with Cara Sampson as his cooperating teacher.

As members of the pilot study conducted in the Spring of 2005, each preservice teacher learned about socioconstructivist lesson design and historical thinking via class lecture, activities, and practice. Using guidelines from Smith and Ragan (1999), the preservice teachers learned an “accordion style” of planning and teaching. They were provided with clear guidelines and feedback for the actual written plans (see Appendix B). Their lessons were refined both as a group process in class as well as via practice in the field while working with their university facilitators. The socioconstructivist principles were introduced over four class periods (equaling four weeks) and historical thinking was a primary element throughout the coursework though it was punctuated by lessons with History Alive! and a special historical technology project in which students examined an event or person(s) of importance to a minority community. These historian projects make up part of the pilot study data.

RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

“All researchers have great privilege and obligation: the privilege to pay attention and the obligation to make conclusions drawn from those choices meaningful to colleagues and clients” (Stake, 1995, p. 49). Beyond Stake’s assertion of paying attention and drawing conclusions, such privilege and obligation extends to the researcher disclosing positionality and conducting the research in an ethical manner.

I approach this dissertation study with previous experience as a teacher in both middle and high school for eight years, a graduate student in curriculum studies and a university facilitator / teaching assistant for 5 years. My interest in conducting this

dissertation was instigated by remembering my own struggles as a young teacher in connecting vague theory to difficult practice and in implementing effective and interesting classroom lessons, it also serves the purpose of partly fulfilling the requirements for a doctorate in philosophy.

A significant consideration is that of conflict of interest between the researcher, the participants, and their respective scholarly obligations. Two of the participants of this study were under my supervision during their Intern teaching semester in the Spring of 2005 while in the field and for five classroom seminars co-taught with a second facilitator. All four will be in the field under my supervision in the Fall of 2005 as well as in seminar, also co-taught with a colleague. The data collected and findings of the study will in no way affect the students' evaluations for grades or course completion. Neither professor assigning grades to the students will have access to research data or results prior to course completion.

This concept of socioconstructivist principles and historical thinking has developed via several iterations of the project in four semesters of classroom and pilot studies. With each variation, the research has taken on and has lost constructs, theories, and participants and has been refined as results emerge. As each version has improved, my own research skills have improved and I have cultivated and nurtured the intuitions and abilities important to qualitative research such as descriptive writing, interviewing, keen observation, data organization and analysis and synthesis of results.

In contemplating my role as researcher, Stake's (1995) conception of case researcher as interpreter is most fitting. According to Stake,

the case researcher recognizes and substantiates new meanings. Whoever is a researcher has recognized a problem, puzzlement, and studies it, hoping to connect it better with known things. Finding new connections, the researcher finds ways to make them comprehensible to others. (p. 97)

It is my hope that I will be able to conceive some new connections between socioconstructivism, experiential education, socioconstructivist pedagogy, and historical thinking. If I am successful, more students will better be able to apply learning theory to teaching situations -- to extend that learning theory beyond a single application and coherently explain and design their teaching strategies in accordance with how students learn best.

Given the interdependent nature of the work conducted by the researcher and participants, indeed, both the researcher and the preservice teachers represent the university to the community; ethical research is a necessity on professional and moral grounds. Therefore, it is critical that the researcher conducts the study with the utmost consideration for research ethics by respecting the participants, the research process and the outside community involved.

STUDY TIMELINE AND PILOT RESEARCH

The study is designed to begin in the Fall of 2005, as soon as IRB consent is obtained. Interviews, observations, and artifact collection will take place during this semester as well as the preliminary organization and analysis of data. In the Spring of 2006, it is expected that the bulk of data analysis and writing will take place, with editing and revising to occur in the Summer of 2006. Final review and the defense will take place

in early Fall 2006. Should an adjustment be needed due to IRB constrictions, four participants will be added in the Spring of 2006 but the timeline will follow the original trajectory with completion later in the Fall of 2006.

This study originated in a very different form as a class project in a course entitled “Secondary Education Curriculum” in the Spring of 2004 as an investigation into preservice teachers’ design and use of lesson plans. The second iteration of this study expanded the use of lesson designs and brought in socioconstructivist principles but the resulting literature review was disappointing -- it seems that very little research has been done with regard to lesson planning; in contrast, the literature investigating socioconstructivism was overwhelming. Thus, a conceptual paper on constructivism was prepared to fulfill the Section B requirement of the qualifying exams in the Spring of 2005. (Developed from this paper was the subtle, yet important, differentiation between constructivism and socioconstructivism.) One set of interviews with preservice social studies teachers has been conducted pairing socioconstructivism and historical thinking and resulting in three conference presentations, two at the 2005 American Association for Teaching and Curriculum (AATC) in Austin, Texas and one at the 2005 College and University Faculty Assembly (CUFA, an affiliate of the National Council for the Social Studies) conference in Kansas City, Missouri. A final and fourth version of this pilot study was conducted exploring socioconstructivism as it relates to multiculturalism and it has been submitted as a part of a panel proposal to the 2005 American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference in San Francisco, California.

A great deal of productive work, (some non-productive work!) and thought has resulted from this investigation over the past several semesters. As the study has been

refined and tangents explored, conceptions of constructivism have been clarified and expanded. Research and organizational skills have been markedly improved in the process as well. The result is, in part, this dissertation, in addition to a long list of future research ideas.

LIMITATIONS

One of the limitations of this dissertation lies in the fact that neither preservice teacher/participant has had the opportunity to work in his or her own classroom with his or her own students -- they are guests in their cooperating teachers' room. Even with excellent historical thinking lesson design, cooperating teachers may veto the project based on their own lesson plans, professional obligations, and beliefs about classroom learning. Additionally, the on-site school context is dependent on the location of the preservice teachers' intern or apprentice assignment by the University that may be arbitrary or controlled by factors beyond the scope of both researcher and participant.

A final consideration is the possibility that these students will benefit from the experience of having their thoughts and actions focused on historical thinking and receiving feedback regarding their teaching, perhaps giving them an advantage as compared to other students in the class.

SUMMARY

Through the use of rigorous qualitative case study research, the purpose of the study is to uncover the processes and features of preservice social studies teachers' understanding and implementation of historical thinking and socioconstructivism in the classroom -- further, what is the meaning of these constructs for the preservice teachers? The procedure and operational details of the study are presented and justified in this chapter. Additionally, guidelines for maintaining quality research and analysis are provided. Ultimately, Stake's (1995) assertion that, "The function of research is not necessarily to map and conquer the world but to sophisticate the beholding of it" (p. 43) is the goal of this dissertation, to illuminate and understand the preservice teachers' successes, hesitations, and struggles with socioconstructivist pedagogy.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

SOCIOCONSTRUCTIVIST PEDAGOGY – APPRENTICE TEACHERS

1. Tell me about your understanding of socioconstructivist lessons? What makes a lesson socioconstructivist?
2. What are the primary components of socioconstructivist lesson design?
3. How do you define knowledge? What is the role of knowledge in learning?
4. Tell me about your experience with socioconstructivist lessons in school as a student in high school, college, or previous education (UTeach) coursework?
5. Tell me about the differences between socioconstructivist and non-socioconstructivist lessons. Which type do you prefer as a student? As a teacher? Why?
6. How do your students respond to socioconstructivist lessons? What are the benefits? Drawbacks?
7. What is the importance of culture and individuality in the classroom? How do you account for and utilize them to benefit students?
8. How do socioconstructivist lessons work in diverse classrooms? Do they acknowledge or maximize cultural differences/similarities? In what ways?

9. Tell me your thoughts on lesson planning in general. What similarities or differences do you see between your coursework and fieldwork in terms of use of socioconstructivism and/or historical thinking?
10. What is the purpose of lesson design? How do you connect lesson design and classroom management/environment? Do socioconstructivist lessons alter your classroom management? In what ways?
11. How do you conduct assessments for socioconstructivist lessons?
12. Please define / explain the Zone of Proximal Development.
13. What is the role of peer collaboration/group work in socioconstructivist lessons?
14. What types of teaching and learning tools do you use with students in social studies classes? How do you define a teaching/learning tool?
15. How do you differentiate popular and academic knowledge? What roles do they play in learning?
16. How do you focus students on their own learning styles / skills? In what ways do you teach them about “how they learn” and how to take advantage of that?

HISTORICAL THINKING – APPRENTICE TEACHERS

1. Please define / explain historical thinking.
2. What importance do you place on historical thinking in the social studies?
Why?
3. What are your prior experiences with historical thinking -- in high school, college or previous education (UTeach) coursework?
4. What benefits and drawbacks do you see in working with primary source documents with your students?
5. How do you go about developing document-based questions (DBQ's) for your students?
6. How do students use document-based questions in your lessons?
7. In what ways do you examine students' prior knowledge in your lessons?
And in lessons particularly involving historical thinking?
8. How do you believe that student prior knowledge in social studies topics helps or hinders your lessons? How do you mitigate or maximize those effects?
9. How do you contextualize -- place historical events in context -- with your students? Is this important? Why or why not?
10. How do historical thinking techniques engage your students? Do you believe your lessons are rigorous and relevant for students? In what ways?

11. What is the role of the teacher in the social studies classroom?
12. Is there practical value in the social studies? What is it? How do you emphasize the practical aspect of social studies with your students?
13. How do you gauge student interest and abilities in social studies topics?
14. Should students be able to direct their own work in the social studies?
How would you facilitate that as the teacher?
15. How do you assess student work with historical thinking in social studies?

HISTORICAL THINKING AND SOCIOCONSTRUCTIVIST PEDAGOGY – COURSE INSTRUCTOR

1. Why choose socioconstructivism and historical thinking as your frame for teaching and learning?
2. Do you believe that in order to use socioconstructivist teaching and historical thinking (effectively) one must adopt an interpretive epistemological stance?
3. How do you explain the gap between University practice and fieldwork that students experience?
4. Do you encourage students to continue on paths of new (or different) curriculum and instruction? How and why do you accomplish this?
5. In what way(s) do you model socioconstructivist practice and historical thinking in your own teaching?

6. Do you believe that the preservice teachers engage in socioconstructivist practice and historical thinking in your classroom as students? Do they have previous experience with these concepts?
7. What is the preservice teacher response to these ideas of socioconstructivist practice and historical thinking in both your class and for their fieldwork?
8. How does the idea of “theory into practice” in relation to socioconstructivist pedagogy and historical thinking translate for students?
9. Do you assess your students’ work in socioconstructivist practice and historical thinking in their class assignments? What strengths and weaknesses do you see in these two areas with your preservice teachers?
10. Do you see evidence of preservice teachers’ use of socioconstructivist practice and historical thinking in the field? Do you believe their efforts are successful? How do you gauge this assessment of their work?

APPENDIX B: SOCIOCONSTRUCTIVIST LESSON DESIGN GUIDELINES

Name _____

Spring 2005

Lesson Checklist

Criteria	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4
<i>TEKS</i> (2-3 and written out)				
<i>Learning Objectives</i> Do you use (use Banks & Banks AND Bloom's Taxonomy) active and specific verb choices that demonstrates scaffolding and alignment with TEKS)?				
<i>Introduction:</i> Do you make the lesson relevant to students' lives?				
<i>Introduction:</i> Do you access student's prior learning/knowledge?				
<i>Introduction:</i> Did you preview of lesson/day's agenda?				
<i>Body:</i> Do you include a variety of instructional approaches?				
<i>Body:</i> Do you provide detailed steps that clearly show how students progress within the instructional strategy/lesson?				
<i>Body:</i> Do you provide samples of prewritten prompts/questions that help scaffold students towards more critical thinking (Bloom)?				
<i>Body:</i> Do you model learning in whole class before small group or individual work?				
<i>Body:</i> Do you provide continuous feedback and refocus on lesson learning objectives?				
<i>Conclusion:</i> Do you provide for student generated closure?				
Are a variety of <i>assessment</i> approaches included?				
Lessons include <i>technology, primary source, current event, and History Alive</i>				

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