

Elementary Teacher Perceptions of Teaching Literacy Through Social Studies

BY

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Abstract

This dissertation project has been designed to better understand elementary teacher perceptions about teaching literacy skills through social studies instruction. Teacher perceptions will be defined as the understandings and assumptions that elementary teachers hold with regard to teaching literacy through social studies concepts and content.

The two main research questions are:

- (1) What do elementary teachers perceive as needs in teaching literacy through social studies?
- (2) What do elementary teachers perceive as barriers to teaching literacy through social studies?

The research participants included third and fourth grade teachers across three elementary schools within the Mayberry School District. Data were collected via teacher interviews and classroom observations. Using a grounded theory approach, the data were analyzed and theories that address the research questions were generated. While limited in their generalizability, as is often the case in a qualitative study, the goal was nonetheless to gain a better phenomenological understanding of the perceptions that these teachers hold. Understanding these perceptions may enable professional development providers to offer teachers with targeted learning opportunities designed to instruct them on how to do this and to do it well. There are also potential implications for future research. A better understanding of teacher perceptions of teaching literacy skills through social studies concepts and content in general can set the stage for future research that focuses on teaching finite literacy skills (example – making inferences) through social studies as well. This research study suggests that elementary teachers value the importance of teaching literacy through social studies and that they believe there is inherent value in this

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approach. In order to do so effectively, they require a greater amount of targeted high quality training, materials, and other supports than those which are typically provided to elementary teachers.

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Chapter 1 -Background

Social Studies in the Elementary School

The role of social studies in the elementary classroom has historically been subordinate to other content areas. This tendency has become even more pervasive in the shadow of increased high stakes testing. Instructional priorities have shifted towards mathematics and language arts and away from social studies. An integration approach to social studies that teaches literacy skills through social studies as a content area provides a solution for the need to increase student skills in working with nonfiction texts. It can also counteract the tendency to marginalize the teaching of social studies at the elementary level because social studies as a content area is a rich source of non-fiction, informational text.

Elementary teachers don't teach much social studies. Tanner notes that, "Social studies (at the elementary level) takes a back seat...is so unimportant it is scheduled less than Gym...there is little doubt that it has lost its place as a core academic subject." (Tanner, 2008, p.42) Elementary social studies curricula have received markedly less implementation, attention, and perceived relevance in the wake of the national high stakes testing movement (Heafner and Fitchett, 2012). *When it is taught*, it too often comes in the form that makes social studies professionals cringe – shallow, positively stereotypical, nationalistic activities of little real value (Loewen, 1995).

The New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) for English Language Arts (ELA) are used as the basis both for district level curricula in NJ and are aligned with the required, state level PARCC assessment. The NJSLS sets a bar that requires students to engage deeply with nonfiction, informational texts. While the NJSLS parameters do not specifically require the integration of *social studies* content as a means to advance literacy, they clearly require a

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substantial infusion of nonfiction, informational texts in order to meet literacy goals. The elementary standards explicitly state that, “Standards define general, cross-disciplinary literacy expectations that must be met for students to be prepared to enter college and workforce training programs ready to succeed.” (NJSLS ELA, 2016) “Cross disciplinary” certainly includes social studies as a content area. Social studies is a perfect fit as a content area derived source of nonfiction, informational texts. There is currently no state (or federally) mandated assessment for social studies. The NJSLS for social studies are used as the basis for the development of district level curricula in NJ. There is a skill chart included in the document that highlights the importance of skill acquisition in social studies instruction. Relative to literacy, the standards include, “Identify and interpret a variety of primary and secondary sources for reconstructing the past...Use evidence to support an idea in a digital, oral and/written format, Share information about a topic in an organized manner (e.g., provide a coherent line of reasoning with supporting/relevant details), speaking clearly and at an appropriate pace (NJSLS Social Studies, 2014). In reality, the NJSLS in ELA require students to engage in cross curricular learning experiences that are a great fit for social studies content. Likewise, the NJSLS in social studies require the kinds of literacy skills instruction that are not only required by the NJSLS in ELA, but as well these skills are measured by the PARCC assessment.

Gaining an understanding of teacher perceptions pertaining to how to effectively deliver literacy instruction through social studies content and concepts (and related nonfiction texts) can assist researchers, school leaders, and professional development providers in designing professional learning opportunities with these teacher perceptions in mind.

Objectives

The purpose of this grounded theory study is to understand what elementary teachers perceive as needs and barriers to teaching literacy skills through social studies concepts and content.

Needs are defined as the resources, training, curricular materials, and/or any other type of support that teachers believe are necessary for them to do this effectively. Providing teachers with the necessary tools to be able to do this and to do it well is extremely important in achieving the goal of methodically and intentionally teaching literacy skills through the social studies content area. It is relevant to understand these perceived needs in order to provide teachers with support, professional development, and resources. Expecting teachers to effectively teach literacy skills through social studies concepts and content without training and support would likely bear little fruit. It is necessary for teachers to understand what this means and for them to be able to articulate the supports that they require in order for school leaders to meet those needs.

Barriers are defined as any obstacle or lack of a need or needs being met that in any way hinders or prevents teachers from effectively teaching literacy through social studies. While needs focus on what teachers perceive as necessary to have or learn with regard to teaching literacy skills through social studies, perceived barriers represent that which teachers believe stands in the way. Some perceived barriers may be real while others may be misperceptions. Understanding teachers' perceptions of barriers is critically important. These perceived realities, when shared with researchers, can provide an insight whereby professional development programs (that pertain to teaching literacy through social studies) can be proactively designed in ways that address these perceptions head on. Real barriers can be removed, misperceptions can be dispelled, and needs can be addressed so that teachers can do this and do it well.

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Teacher perceptions will be defined as the understandings and assumptions that teachers hold with regard to teaching literacy through social studies concepts and content. The two main research questions are as follows:

1. *What do elementary teachers perceive as needs in teaching literacy through social studies?*
2. *What do elementary teachers perceive as barriers to teaching literacy through social studies?*

These questions are relevant to my positionality as a social studies researcher and an elementary school leader. On a personal level, they are intellectually stimulating to me. More importantly, they are reflective of an area in the research literature that would benefit from further study because the existing body of research is virtually silent on these particular questions.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

The State of Social Studies in the Elementary Schools

In order to understand the role of literacy in elementary social studies instruction, it is useful to first explore the role of social studies in the elementary schools. There is a substantial body of research that concludes that elementary social studies has, "...perennially held a minimal role within the elementary curriculum." (Heafner & Fitchett, 2012, p.68). The scope and sequence of elementary social studies has changed little over the last half century (Duplass, 2007). The research literature reflects a common conclusion that elementary social studies is largely viewed as non-essential and receives curricular and classroom attention only if and after other subjects are taught (Holloway and Chiodo, 2009). Although, "...many scholars have called for an increase in the amount of history taught at the elementary school..." (Levstik & Barton, 2008b, p.159). Elementary social studies, "...may appear to teachers unrelated to the rest of their program, an unwelcome add-on subject competing for time with the required 'basic skills'." (Martin, 1990, p.306). This reality exists despite the fact that, "...in the United States...children from a young age are interested in and knowledgeable about history." (Levstik & Barton, 2008d, p.347).

Social Studies Curricula at the Elementary Level

Most elementary social studies curricula are similarly structured. An integrated disciplinary social studies approach is used in the place of focusing on the discrete academic disciplines that make up the field (history, economics, geography, sociology, etc.). An expanding communities approach is prevalent among elementary social studies curricula (Chapin, 2006). Curricular frameworks provided by states lack the specificity that would make them useful resources to teachers. In the wake of increased accountability measures in literacy and

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mathematics, time on task in elementary social studies has been severely curtailed. A prevalent curricular structure at the elementary level is for social studies to be taught for only part of the year. The “holiday curriculum” is a staple in elementary curricula - as students learn pedantic perspectives of Columbus Day, Thanksgiving, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, etc. (Brophy and Alleman, 2009, p. 359). The common curricular structure that exists largely results in students receiving social studies instruction that is low in quality and disconnected from other disciplines (Barton, 2008 p.305). Elementary social studies curricula are typically textbook driven. Alter notes that the curricular structure is perceived by students as, “...authoritative knowledge and truth; however, texts typically replicate the social norms and beliefs that govern society and depict them in a way that is incomplete and misleading.” (Alter, 1995, p.357) Brophy and Alleman note that, “...the content does not consist of networks of connected information structured around big ideas...Instead, it consists of parades of disconnected facts...” (Brophy and Alleman, 2009, p.359). Martin is rightly critical of elementary curricula because they do little to provide elementary students with the kinds of thoughtful and engaging learning experiences that they are in fact well equipped to encounter (Martin, 1990, p. 306). Elementary students are perfectly capable of exploring, “...different perspectives and generating multiple answers to problems.” (Gavin, Libresco, and Marron, 1999, p. 15.)

Why Elementary Social Studies Holds a Low Position as a Content Area

Elementary social studies holds a low position among the instructional priorities that exist in most schools (Binkley, 2011). The quality of curricula available to facilitate engaging instruction is limited, as is the ability of most elementary teachers to deliver quality instruction. There are many reasons for this. Social studies instruction at the elementary level always faces the inherent challenge that students often have little to no prior knowledge and experience in

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working with a topic, which places the burden of transmitting this important new information squarely on the classroom teacher (Brophy and Alleman, 2009). The notion that social studies holds a low priority in comparison to other curricular areas at the elementary level is often made clear to student teachers by their cooperating teachers, both in theory and practice (Passe, 1990). Elementary age students, "...think of themselves as historically conscious individuals: They know about history, they're interested in it, and they want to learn more." (Levstik & Barton, 2008d, p.350). Yet, there is very little district level professional development that pertains to teaching elementary social studies (Brophy and Alleman, 2008, 2009). Teacher education programs fail to adequately prepare elementary teachers to deliver high quality social studies instruction (Holloway and Chiodo 2009, and Tanner, 2008). Thorton notes that, "Even if...a new teacher has taken a social studies methods course, one course is a meager preparation for the pedagogic demands of subject matter. More likely the methods that come to mind will reflect the teacher's experiences in school and college, especially the most recent and best recalled of those experiences in college and high school." (Thorton, 2005, p.79) Elementary social studies teachers, "...are not single field specialists. Elementary teachers juggle many competing claims for attention..."(Levstik & Barton, 2008a, p.96) Elementary teachers typically do not explicitly discuss the purpose of studying history (and by extension, social studies) with their students (Levstik & Barton, 2008d).

Teachers are posed with "tough decisions" as to how to allocate time to social studies instruction while experiencing the pressures of high stakes testing in ELA and Mathematics (Heafner and Fitchett, 2012). Because of high stakes testing, teachers are often pressured into allocating more instructional time in Math and Language Arts and less in social studies (Sunal and Sunal, 2007-2008).

Swimming Against The Tide - Individual Teacher Practices

Teachers sometimes engage in “constrained professionalism”, teaching to core skills and concepts despite mounting pressures to de-emphasize social studies. Yet, other systemic building based changes (such as reducing social studies time school wide) still continue to minimize social studies (Wills, J. S. & Sandholtz, J. H. 2009). Other teachers engage in “ambitious teaching”, as a middle ground, considering the impact of mandated testing on their instructional practice without allowing those considerations to dominate what and how they teach (Grant, 2010). Cornbleth identifies “strategic compliance” as an option where social studies teachers are, “...giving the appearance of going along with the dominant school culture while not giving in to it.” (Cornbleth, 2010, p. 221) This is an important responsibility as, “Teachers typically have little individual control over many of the factors that shape the conditions of schooling. But in their classrooms they often have a measure of autonomy to create a space that can profoundly affect the lives of young people.” (“Rethinking Our Classroom”, 2001, p. 2).

Elementary Social Studies Textbooks as a Resource

The research literature reflects a strong consensus that there is an over reliance on textbooks that contain only superficial content and lack any real depth and meaning. (Alleman & Brophy, 2008; Brophy & Alleman, 2009; Levstik & Barton, 2008f). However, not all researchers are in agreement. Chapin notes that, “If you compare a new social studies textbook series with the one you had in elementary school, you will notice that today’s textbooks are much more colorful and attractive...Educators complain about over reliance on the textbook...however...the textbook can be a very valuable resource.” (Chapin, 2006, p. 24-25). It is important to note that the publisher of Chapin’s Elementary Social Studies is Pearson, a major textbook publishing company! More attractive colors on textbooks are superficial at best and many other researchers

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share in the concern regarding an over reliance on textbooks that are low in quality. This is a very real problem in elementary social studies instruction. Turner rightly states, “What do you need to know about the social studies?...It is certainly more than you will be able to get from any textbook.” (Turner, 1999, p.6). Alter (1995) notes that elementary social studies textbooks, “...reflect an American perspective of History exclusively, to lack depth in their treatment of cultural and historical content, to provide little meaningful or more than fact level content, to omit controversial aspects of history, and to provide insufficient opportunities for critical thinking and decision making.” (357). Lee (2008) notes that there are substantial limitations to the usefulness of textbooks as a primary resource for content related information. Brophy (2009) likewise notes that the teacher’s, “...view of social studies often is limited to the content of the social studies textbooks used at their grade level (typically purchased from one of four major publishers).” (p. 359). At the elementary level, between 75-90 percent of instructional time is based on the textbook (Holloway and Chiodo, 2009, Haas and Laughlin, 1997). Student learning through textbooks is largely limited to the transmission of information, while by contrast students, “...learn to read passionately and critically with nonfiction trade books.” (Callison, 2013, p.20) Crocco notes that, “Textbook accounts...leave out a great deal...contribute to distorting and falsifying the past.” (Crocco, 2010, p. 180). Barton notes that, “Textbook publishers...ever mindful of profits, seek to avoid such controversies and seek to continue to frame their texts within a narrative of progress and development.” (Barton, 2008, p.324). Research on social studies textbooks at the elementary level suggests that students consider them to be authoritative sources of factual information. As a result, elementary students develop little sense of the interpretive nature of historical/social studies issues unless this is explicitly taught (Levstik & Barton, 2008c). Relying on textbooks as a primary instructional tool at the

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elementary level does not meet this end (Levstik & Barton, 2008c, p.224-225). Evans notes that, “...textbooks have served as a lightning rod, attracting comment and criticism regarding the nature of the field and the purposes of schooling...” (Evans, 2010, p. 26). Vansledright notes that social studies textbooks do, “...little to build capacity to think historically...actually retard the development of historical thinking because they foster the naive conception that the past...(is) fixed and stable forever...(and that) the textbooks...map directly and without distortion on the past.” (Vansledright, 2010, p. 117)

Historical Fiction at the Elementary Level

Some elementary teachers turn to historical fiction/literature as a resource to deliver content based and or literacy based social studies instruction. Implementing literacy based instruction through the use of children’s literature can help students to gain a more meaningful understanding of social studies content and concepts (Krey, 1998 and Hicks, 1996). Obenchain and Morris note that children’s literature “integrates naturally” with social studies instruction, while stressing that the teaching of social studies content and literacy skills should be equally important priorities (Obenchain and Morris, 2003, p. 98). Using literature to teach social studies content and concepts enhances the interest level of elementary students who engage with the content and concepts (Morin, Introduction). McGowan, Erickson, and Neufeld note that, “We join educators who have advanced the literature-social studies connection and recommend that teachers adopt this potentially productive instructional approach.” (1996, p. 206).

While there are strengths to making use of literature/historical fiction, there are risks as well. Elementary students may mistake historical fiction as fact, becoming confused between historical fiction and factual information. (Crocco, 2010). The use of historical fiction that lacks historical authenticity can be extremely detrimental to students as they may well internalize

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fiction as authenticated, actual history (Reese, et al, 2001, p. 57-62). As early as 1902, Dewey similarly warns of relying on historical fiction for this very reason, stating,

A consciousness of the social aim of history prevents any tendency to swamp history in myth, fairy story, and merely literary renderings...when Robinson Crusoe supplies the material for the curriculum of the third- or fourth-grade child, are we not putting the cart before the horse? Why not give the child the reality with its much larger sweep, its intenser forces, it's more vivid and lasting value for life...(Dewey, 2001, p. 99)

Nonfiction, Informational Texts That Focus on Social Studies Content and Concepts

The use of non-fiction, informational texts at the elementary level promotes strengthening of literacy skills and progress toward content area mastery. These texts are an invaluable resource for teachers who embark on an integrative approach to social studies instruction. Levstik notes that, "...well crafted nonfiction historical literature can also evoke a strong response from children...response(s) to nonfiction indicate that this area requires considerably more investigation (Levstik & Barton, 2008e, p.49). There is great value in presenting multiple non fiction texts to students that represent conflicting perspectives. Teaching students to make sense of these diverging points of view on a topic, idea, and/or historical event builds their capacity both to engage in historical thinking and to strengthen their literacy skills. Vansledright notes that,

The younger the students, the more likely they are to conclude that the past is either given or inaccessible or both...with continued source work...a major epistemological shift occurs in how students understand the past...differences observed among sources come to

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be understood as a consequence of distortions...bias, exaggeration, ideology...perspective assessment becomes a part of the learner's strategic and analytic cognitive capacity... Students-even the young ones-need opportunities to engage these (nonfiction) sources, to learn to assess their status, and to begin building and writing their own interpretations of the past. (VanSledright, 2010, p. 116-117).

Working with nonfiction texts should be an important priority at the elementary level (Callison, 2013). For example, the use of historical narratives as a form of nonfiction text is appropriate at the elementary level because they, "...deal with basic and powerful emotions that are familiar even to young children." (Levstik & Barton, 2008g, p.10) Levstik and Barton also support the idea that working with historical narratives as a source of nonfiction text can present powerful content related learning opportunities to students (2011). Student ability to effectively engage in the use of non-fiction texts is critical in the development of reading comprehension ability (Brophy and Alleman, 2009). The frequent reading of nonfiction, informational texts among students leads to larger and more meaningful literacy gains than does a non-integrated approach (in either social studies or language arts alone) that emphasizes literature. Brophy and Alleman (2008) and Levstik (2009) found that elementary students express a strong sentiment of "needing to know" when working with non-fiction narratives such as historical biographies. Students are motivated to read and comprehend text of increasingly difficult complexity as a result of needing to know more about a topic that greatly interests them (Levstik & Barton, 2008g). Carlsson-Paige and Lantieri note that, "Throughout the elementary school years, a child's ability to handle increasingly complex ideas grows slowly...Older elementary students love to examine problems of all kinds...to write." (Carlsson-Paige and Lantieri, 2005, p. 115) The inherent value of

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focusing on literacy skills in the social studies is further supported by VanSledright as he explains that students should develop into,

...careful, critical readers and the consumers of ...evidentiary source data...skilled at detecting spin, hype, snake-oil sales pitches...to build and defend evidence based arguments...they are informed, educated, thoughtful critical readers, who...know good arguments when they hear them. (VanSledright, 2010, p. 118)

Segall further notes that, “Drawing attention to not only what a text says but how it is organized to make its particular claims to knowledge...is a significant pedagogical move we, as teachers, need to take...to questioning how texts come to be what they are and do what they do.” (Segall, 2010, p.230) Hamston and Murdoch further note the value of engaging students with critical literacy,

Teachers bring the world into the classroom through texts: Written texts such as...diary extracts, historical records...ensure that the texts you select...provide students with varied and challenging perspectives...It is essential...that...young learners are encouraged to read these texts critically and uncover the social and cultural meanings embedded within them. (Hamston and Murdoch, 1996, p. 15-16)

An Integrative Approach - Teaching Literacy Skills through Social Studies Content

An integrative approach to teaching social studies melds together two instructional priorities. There is a deliberate focus both on teaching relevant social studies concepts/content/skills *and the purposeful teaching of literacy skills*. When teachers engage in an integrative approach, the delivery of literacy instruction through social studies concepts and content is far from incidental. There is a well planned and intentional focus to use social studies content as a vehicle through which to teach specific literacy skills, such as those that would be

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explicitly taught in an English Language Arts lesson. Students don't merely "read to learn" through an integrative approach, they are also learning to read (Parker, 2001, 380-385). Elementary age students are well equipped to engage in "content area literacy" as this instructional approach facilitates the strengthening of literacy and content area skills (Connor Et al., 2017). An integrative approach that focuses on delivering literacy instruction through social studies minimizes the marginalization of social studies as a content area and promotes the strengthening of student literacy skills. A literacy-social studies integrative approach can act as a means to reduce the marginalization of elementary social studies (Sell, 2017; Bennett & Hinde, 2015; Serriere, 2015; Sell 2017). Binkley (2011) and Britt (2017) further refer to "disciplinary literacy" as a way to describe a purposeful pedagogical approach to teaching literacy through content area instruction. Brugar (2016) similarly references "disciplinary specific instruction" that focuses on reading and writing. According to the National Writing Project, "In social studies, writing across the curriculum can be used in two ways: as a means to teach the student to master distinct forms and conventions of writing ...or as a means for the student to learn and retain content through more informal kinds of writing..." (National Writing Project and Nagin, 2003, p 51-52) Morrow contends that,

Social studies...themes for the most part provide the meaning and function for learning, particularly literacy learning. Themes provide a reason to read and write about topics of interest. Skills are learned within a context, rather than in isolated lessons for skill development...Science and social studies are probably the two content areas that provide the greatest opportunities for literacy development. (Morrow, 2012, 358-359)

Haas and Laughlin note that, "...teachers of social studies should be concerned with the several reading, comprehension, and interpretation skills students need to develop in order to be

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effective readers and strategic learners of social studies (Haas and Laughlin, 1997, p 329). Brophy and Alleman support such an approach that is multidisciplinary and rich in content (2009). Seefeldt states that, “Try to find a key concept or a suggested activity in any of the chapters of this text that does not involve children when they are studying other subjects in school. Most social studies concepts and activities involve children in using language arts through listening, speaking, reading, or writing.” (Seefeldt (2005), p. 15-16). Parker describes the integration of reading skills as one of five key ways to enrich any (social studies) unit (Parker, 2001, p. 239-241). Hickey notes that,

We must equip them (students) with the skills required for critical reading: wisdom, reflective thought, and logic...to prepare our students to make intelligent decisions...we must teach them to read...with an intellectual eyebrow cocked...To equip children for leading us into tomorrow. We must help them become thinking readers today. (Hickey, 1990, p.175-176).

Holloway and Chiodo note that, “...integration has become a key to including social studies concepts within the core curriculum framework.” (Holloway & Chiodo, 2009, p.252). Heafner and Fitchett note that elementary social studies as a content area can be, “...a tool for integration to promote literacy goals.” (Heafner & Fitchett, 2012, p.68). Parker states that,

Children improve their reading ability-expanding and deepening it - as they read to learn social studies material...In social studies units with good coaching, children’s reading ability will develop in ways that will rouse their minds and empower them (and their society) for the rest of their lives. (Parker, 2001, p. 380)

Chapin notes that, “Social studies instructional activities are dependent on literacy. Reading skills are essential for social studies learning.” (Chapin, 2006, p. 277). Chapin further notes that a

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general focus on literacy, through both reading and writing, should be ever present in elementary social studies instruction (Chapin, 2006). Fearn and Fearn stress the importance of literacy through writing in social studies instruction and assert that students should be explicitly taught strategies for writing within the social studies content area as a means to strengthen their content knowledge (Fearn and Fearn, 2013). Davis Et al found that focusing on content area specific journal writing enhanced both student writing skills and mastery of social studies content (1992). Even primary age children benefit from explicit pre-writing skill development, such as organizing and interpreting information through classifying and comparing/contrasting as a precursor to expressing their ideas in writing (Seefeldt, 2005). Turner furthers this case by stating that,

Reading and writing are important and related tool skills for the social studies. Obviously, students need to learn to use their reading ability to get information...many kinds of social studies activities require writing, either to show that learning has occurred or that students understand that learning (Turner, 1999, p. 115).

Levstik and Barton (2011) advocate student generated biographies, journals, diaries, essays, letters and poetry as meaningful focus areas for student writing. Obenchain and Morris (2003) advocate the use of literature and student generated texts such as newspaper making and oral histories as opportunities to integrate literacy and social studies instruction. Literacy concepts and theories can enrich historical thinking and social studies instruction (Levstik & Barton, 2008i, p.231). Tanner supports the idea of teaching literacy through social studies by noting that, “...standards based lesson plans for social studies...should be (1) integrated with reading...(and) require the students to use higher level thinking skills to classify, interpret, analyze, or evaluate

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information.” (Tanner, 2008, p.43) Lee (2008) further supports a literacy based, integrative approach to social studies instruction.

While the research literature reflects an overwhelmingly positive outlook on an integrative approach, there are undertones of trepidation that deal with disproportionately prioritizing the literacy component at the expense of content area (social studies) knowledge and skills. Brophy and Alleman (2009) maintain that while literacy skills are appropriately applied through social studies lessons and vice versa, focusing on literacy alone through social studies content cannot completely replace a more comprehensive approach to social studies instruction. They also support the use of, “...informational texts on geographical and social science topics...(as a) welcome enrichment of primary social studies...” (Alleman & Brophy, 2008, p.38). Research suggests that social studies as a content area is already being used as a vehicle to promote literacy and vice versa (Holloway and Chiodo, 2009). It is notable that this can sometimes be viewed as a “trade-off” between social studies and Language Arts, rather than a practice that can enrich both instructional areas. Alleman and Brophy state that when literacy is taught through social studies, “Some units look more like language arts...(the) activities accompanying the literary work shift the instruction to language arts.” (Alleman & Brophy, 1994, p.6). Likewise, Pace (2012) offers a “cautionary tale” by noting that an intense focus on literacy skills can dilute the essence of essential social studies concepts and content. Brophy and Alleman (2008) further note that integration of social studies and literacy at the elementary level is a topic of “perennial interest” and that although they make clear that the integrated approach cannot *replace social studies instruction*, to the extent that it preserves/promotes more curricular time for social studies, it is still, “...better than nothing...” (Alleman & Brophy, 2008, p.39). Chapin similarly notes that there is, “...a prime focus on reading improvement. In fact, some

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critics are worried that the social studies texts are becoming more like reading texts and are not emphasizing enough social studies content (Chapin, 2007, p.23). Despite the substantial discourse in the professional literature regarding the subordinate role of social studies in the elementary curriculum, the integrated approach provides a “contrarian view”. Holloway and Chiodo (2009) conducted a study that suggested that through integration with literacy, social studies in practice was prioritized in elementary schools to a much larger degree than what the generally accepted body of research would suggest. Their 2009 study suggests that an instructional paradigm already exists in some schools that supports the position that literacy skills can and should be taught through social studies lessons at the elementary level. Regarding their study, the authors further note that, “Of those social studies concepts that were taught, most were integrated within other disciplines, with reading being the main area of integration...taught through curriculum integration with social studies and reading, language arts...” (Holloway & Chiodo, 2009, p.251)

An integrated approach to teaching literacy through social studies is a powerful way to address the marginalization of social studies at the elementary level. This instructional approach also presents a highly valuable opportunity to engage students in working with non-fiction, informational texts and historical fiction as they simultaneously receive targeted literacy instruction. Hicks notes that, “The answer to the dilemma of finding time to adequately address all the elementary curriculum areas seems to be...a(n) integrated curriculum...Children’s literature is a perfect conduit through which learning can occur...a natural means for exploring social studies issues in an integrated context.” (Hicks, 1996 p. 216). Holloway and Chiodo (2009) eloquently note that, “By wrapping other content areas in a cocoon of social studies, teachers could solve their time crunch problem...Integration would also give students

opportunities to see how social studies concepts fit into the entirety of human experience...” (p. 240).

How Race and Class Impact Social Studies Engagement for Students

Race and class based factors have a tremendous impact on the meaning, relevance, and degree of acceptance of social studies content and concepts in general. Social studies instruction can act as a powerful means to engage students in activities that lead them to critically analyze historical events and the social/societal status quo. Barton and Levstik (2008) note that, “History matters politically. By directing attention to real or imagined connections between past and present, history is invoked to legitimize the social order, to bind otherwise disparate people together, or to rally support for social change.” (p. 259).

Whether by explicit intent, design, or neglect - this critical lens is too often nonexistent in social studies instruction at all levels. When a critical lens is not present, social studies instruction can act as a means to reinforce the existing social order. Kozol (1991) notes that, “Societies cannot be all generals, no soldiers. But, by our schooling patterns, we assure that soldiers’ children are more likely to be soldiers and that the offspring of the generals will at least have the option to be generals...if it is just a matter of the difficulty of ensuring perfect fairness, why does the unfairness never benefit the children of the poor?” (p. 176).

Social studies instruction at all levels is too often used as a means for students to become indoctrinated in “Bad History” - A chronological, logically flowing narrative of national and world events and social movements that reflect general positive progress for humanity on all fronts (Loewen, 2010, p. 76-78). It is Eurocentric in nature. Textbook reliance is prevalent and problematic since this source and others that are spin off derivatives tend to be sorely lacking in any substantive critical lens. Historical figures, events, social movements, and the like are

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considered “ours” if they are Caucasian-Eurocentric. They are likewise considered to belonging to “them” if they deal with other historical figures, events, and social movements that do not conform to the standard nationalistic/Eurocentric perspective/narrative that promotes what amounts to a holiday curriculum (Brophy and Alleman, 2009, p. 359). The “here and now” are presented as qualitatively better than prior times and places through what Loewen (2010) refers to as “chronological ethnocentrism”.

This standard narrative may contrast sharply with the lived experiences of students of color and those of a lower socioeconomic status. This dominant curricular approach to social studies instruction can understandably delegitimize social studies in the eyes and minds of these students. Simply put, well to do White Students are more likely to accept the standard social studies narrative than is the case with students of color and those of a lower socioeconomic status (Epstein, 2009).

White and African-American students tend to have diverging perspectives on many historical and social studies topics that shape, “...their overall interpretations of US history, school knowledge, national identity, and civic responsibility.” (Epstein, 2009, p.115). White Students from affluent communities tend not to question the generally accepted narrative of positive progress as a cornerstone of social studies instruction. Elementary students across race and socioeconomic lines would have little cause to question it at all. White students tend to be less aware of race and socioeconomic based disparities and how to understand the past (and present) through a critical lens. While students of all races tend not to cultivate a critical lens perspective on their own, they are perfectly capable of engaging in thought and conversations along these lines when they are prompted to do so by their teachers. This is an especially important learning opportunity when dealing with, “...controversial issues that are within the

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living memory of children and the people with whom they come in contact.” (Barton and Levstik, 2008, p. 261).

Non-White students from lower socioeconomic status communities tend to be much more aware of race based differences and how the generally promoted narrative of positive historical and social progress is lacking in accuracy and perspective. These students are less likely to buy into the standard narrative and are at the greatest disadvantage when being presented with a Eurocentric narrative of positive historical and social progress. These students are often forced a narrative that is inconsistent with their lived experiences, beliefs, and realities. Even worse is the scenario where these students *actually accept this narrative* as historical and social truth. In this case, *these students don't even know what they don't know*. While African American students at the high school level may seek alternative, more balanced accounts of history and social movements (Epstein, 2009), elementary aged students are ill equipped to do so on their own.

Without a balanced understanding of historical and social reality, all students are at a grave disadvantage. Reaching an intellectual point where they can question the existing social order based on historical and social reality may become an insurmountable task. It can be argued that this reality is by design so that the existing social order is maintained. In this instance it is the schools - and specifically social studies as a content area - that are used as an effective tool for making that happen. It is clearly worth noting that the acceptance of social studies as a content area depends greatly on how it is presented and on the race and socioeconomic status of the students in a given school community.

The Purpose of Social Studies

Social studies is an invaluable aspect of school curricula because it is through this content/skill area that students learn to understand and make sense of the world around them. There are several orientations within the field. From a disciplinary perspective, the field is defined by a “loose confederation” of social science courses that include aspects of history, geography, government, economics, sociology, psychology, and anthropology (Parker, 2010, p.5).

Social studies has evolved as a field over time and that evolution has been characterized by controversy from the outset. The multidisciplinary orientation of social studies came about as a result of progressive reforms in the field in the 1930’s that created momentum away from history as a stand alone area of academic study. Ensuing “social studies wars” (as they became known) have taken place to some degree ever since. The use of Rugg’s textbooks while amazingly progressive in thought for the time, were labeled as leftist propaganda by many. Social studies instruction swung in a largely reactionary/nationalistic direction as a backlash during the 1940’s and 1950’s. During this time the prevailing instructional tendency was to view social studies as a means to produce “good” and “patriotic” citizens. The 1960’s and 1970’s brought about a rebirth of the progressive mindset with an eye on social studies as a means to enact social and societal awareness and change. As the pendulum eventually swung in the other direction during the 1980’s, there was a virtual rebirth of the conservative orientation of the 1950’s (Evans, 2010, p. 25-32).

Since the 1980’s, the transformation of social studies as a field has been more nuanced and increasingly multifaceted. The multidisciplinary approach has largely emerged as a survivor in the “social studies wars” and is prevalent in social studies curricula today. Engaging students

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in study and thought relative to this confederation takes numerous forms, several of which have hybridized with each other over time. A content based approach to social studies instruction focuses on relaying meaningful (this is extremely subjective) content and concepts from each of the sub-disciplines that make up the confederation. Social education is an orientation that uses social studies content and concepts to promote civic competence. A societal transformation orientation promotes using social studies instruction as a tool to promote change in the societal status quo - an instrument of social engineering. Social studies can (and often is) used as a tool to maintain social order and to promote “good citizens” that complacently accept a generally positive narrative of US and global progress and well being over time. Orientations that either promote social/societal change or use social studies as a means to maintain the status quo are commonly deemed to be a “hidden curriculum”. Parker (2010) notes that when it comes to social studies, purpose matters, perspective matters, subject matters, and looking through a global lens matters (p. 3-11).

There is a skills orientation within the field whose proponents view content as a vehicle to teach essential skills. Skills can include critical thinking, analysis, collaboration with others, the ability to conduct research, and the ability to understand and construct arguments that deal with social studies content and concepts, among others. One such skill orientation is promoting literacy, which is a term that broadly deals with varied aspects of reading and writing (Morrow, 2010). A skills orientation is a challenging proposition because, “...the social studies field contains an almost limitless body of potential subject matter...very little of it can be taught...Only a tiny sample of...skills...is included.” (Parker, 2010, p.8). There are few skills that are more universally critical to student learning than literacy skills and so a literacy based orientation to delivering social studies instruction has great value. With regard to a literacy skill based

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approach to social studies instruction, MacPhee and Whitecotton note that, “When students use literacy strategies as tools for learning, they develop habits of mind that support lifelong learning.” (2011, p. 265)

Citizenship Education in Social Studies

Citizenship education has historically been an integral focus of social studies education. It has been used as a means to promote active, engaged civic competence that can lead to social and societal change. Barton and Levstik conceptualize citizenship education as, “...preparing students for participation in a pluralist society...the foundation not only of social studies but of school more generally in this country.” (2010, p. 39). It has also been used as a tool to promote nationalism and not only the perpetuation but the solidification of the social/societal status quo (Parker, 2008). Citizenship education has met serious resistance over time when it has been implemented as a means of social change (Evans, 2010, p. 108-110). It is no easy task for educators to present students with learning experiences that effectively balance the concepts of unity and diversity. Banks and Nguyen note that, “Citizenship education should help students to develop thoughtful and clarified identifications with their cultural communities and their nation-states.” (Banks and Nguyen, (2008), p. 148).

Engaging students in discussions that deal head on with citizenship issues is an effective approach to citizenship education in general. Hess (2009) notes that, “...there is evidence that participating in controversial issues discussions can build pro-democratic values (such as tolerance), enhance content understanding, and cause students to engage more in the political world.” (p. 32). It is not possible for students to engage in such discussions when they are not provided with the historical/social science background/frameworks that are necessary in order for them to engage in such learning experiences. Hence, individual teacher practices are key in

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addressing historical and social issues in ways that minimize defensiveness on the part of white students and that get beyond anger and frustration among non white students so that quality engagement and dialogue related to citizenship education can take place (Epstein, 2009).

The interpretive frameworks that students and teachers bring to the table that are based on their racial/socioeconomic backgrounds have a substantial impact on how they view history and citizenship education issues. These frameworks can be substantially influenced by factors such as, “Nationality, race-ethnicity, gender, religious orientation...” (Epstein, 2009, preface xv). Race and socioeconomic status are factors that can seriously impact teacher expectations of students. Teachers may well have higher academic expectations for students of “elite” backgrounds in terms of race and socioeconomic class, further placing non-white and lower socioeconomic students at a disadvantage (Loewen, 2010, p. 42-49). Further, when citizenship education takes place in school environments that reflect racial and socioeconomic diversity, “(this) increases the likelihood that dominant norms and practices will be subject to observation and critique.” Parker further notes that when citizenship education occurs in a setting that lacks such diversity, “...growth is stunted, idiocy encouraged, civic consciousness narrowed, and decisions impoverished.” (Parker, 2008, p. 76).

An increasingly balanced and inclusive approach to history/social studies education would facilitate the effective delivery of citizenship education. It would also likely promote a more widespread willingness on the part of all students to engage meaningfully, and more often, in social studies content and concepts. Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn (2000) note that the people and forces that would oppose this, “...are actually frightened by the shattering of elite control over history...by the ‘opening of the American mind’ rather than its closing, and by the far more inclusive, often bittersweet history that young Americans are learning in school.” (p. 24). When

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students have the opportunity to deal with these bittersweet realities, they are able to actively participate in citizenship education that promotes meaningful civic engagement.

Teacher Perceptions - Needs and Barriers to Teaching Literacy Through Social Studies

The research literature is virtually silent on the specific issue of elementary teacher perceptions of needs and obstacles to teaching literacy through social studies. Levstik and Barton (2011) conducted a study that suggested Language Arts skills were heavily interwoven with social studies instruction (p. 113). While this study does not explicitly report on the perceptions of the teacher in regards to teaching literacy through social studies, it is reasonable to conclude, through her practice, that for this teacher it is a priority. Barton and Levstik (2010) studied the issue of why engaging students in historical interpretation is not more of a common practice. Their study touches on perceptions of social studies teachers - the study suggested that there is a disconnect between what many skilled and caring teachers *believe* about engaging students in historical interpretation and their ability and willingness to *actually engage* students in this activity. S.G. Grant (2010) conducted a study that examined how high stakes testing in social studies affected the instructional practices of social studies teachers. Studying the practices of the teachers gives insight in regards to their perceptions, yet the actual perceptions as articulated by the teachers themselves are not given a direct voice. While there is some research literature that touches on elementary social studies teacher perceptions, whether directly or through interpretation based on practice- this body of research does not specifically address the research questions that are the cornerstone of this dissertation project. The research literature does not provide a comprehensive description of what teaching practitioners perceive as needs and barriers to teaching literacy skills through social studies concepts and content. Until school leaders better understand these perceptions, it will be difficult to provide teachers with the

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training, resources, and supports that are needed in order for them to do this, and to do it well. The questions in this study are designed to address this specific and substantial gap in the existing research literature. While the professional literature does address teacher perceptions about a variety of topics related to elementary social studies (Brophy and VanSledright, 1993), the scope of the literature review for this dissertation project has not revealed any research that specifically addresses (1) teacher perceptions about teaching literacy through social studies or (2) what teachers perceive as needs and obstacles related to teaching literacy through social studies.

Pilot Study - Background

I conducted a pilot study during the spring 2014 semester. The pilot study provided an initial understanding of what elementary teachers may perceive as needs and barriers to teaching literacy through social studies concepts and content. The research site was Bobsville Elementary School. Bobsville Elementary School is an upper middle class elementary school with an enrollment of approximately 550 students in grades one through five. The school is situated in north central New Jersey and is one of five like elementary schools in this elementary district. The larger district is comprised of a total of eight schools. Five of the schools are k-5 elementary schools, two are middle schools (6-8) with a population of approximately 1000 students each, and one is an early learning center that encompasses the pre-k and kindergarten population district wide. The district is home to approximately 6,000 students. Upon graduation from one of the five elementary schools, district students attend one of the two middle schools, based on where they reside. Upon graduation from middle school, the students no longer have any formal affiliation with the elementary district as the district feeds into a larger, regional high school district. The demographic makeup of the school is extremely diverse. While African Americans and Latino students are largely underrepresented (less than five percent combined), there is a

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great deal of linguistic, racial, religious, and national origin diversity among the student body. Asian students comprise close to half of the population while there are also substantial numbers of Russian and Jewish students. Close to half of the student body is bilingual, with Russian, Indian Languages, Hebrew, and Mandarin being the dominant second languages that are spoken. The District Factor Group for the school is an “I”, which reflects relative affluence when compared with most other New Jersey schools. The school performs at very high levels of academic achievement as reflected by student performance on such external measures as the NJASK. The community is a clear reflection of the microcosm that is the school. It is an upper, middle class community of educated professionals, many of whom work in or have close connections to New York City, which situates Bobsville Elementary school as a true bedroom community.

Pilot Study - Methodology

The study participants were the fourth grade team of teachers (4 teachers). Under the common core guidelines, the expectations for increased rigor in literacy increases markedly as compared to those which exist in grades k-3. Further, when the newly implemented common core ELA standards in literacy are compared to literacy expectations that previously existed in fourth grade, fourth grade students are expected to perform at levels that were not previously expected until sixth grade. This is why grade four was selected. The entire team was included so that there is some variation in years of experience, training in literacy and social studies, etc. Following IRB approval, I reached out by telephone to each of the prospective research subjects for the purpose of inviting them to participate in the research. The completion of informed consent documentation took place prior to data collection of any kind.

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The data analysis plan for the pilot study was based on sound and accepted qualitative methodologies. The interview transcripts were the main source of data. Upon transcription of the interviews, those data were analyzed by identifying key themes and patterns (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p.26). Analysis was interwoven throughout the data collection and coding process (Patton, 2002, p 436.) Interview transcripts were coded using generally accepted protocols pertaining to qualitative research (Miles and Huberman, 1994, 55-71).

The coding scheme developed was intended to serve both the purposes of data reduction and data complication (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p.29). Using a grounded theory approach (Patton, 2002, 487-491), parent codes were developed. A further categorical analysis of those parent codes has led to the development of child codes (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p. 32-42) as follows:

TL - Example of teaching literacy

- TL** – CR Teaching Literacy through close reading
- TL**-NF Teaching Literacy through nonfiction, informational texts
- TL**-TB Teaching Literacy by using the Social Studies Textbook
- TL**-A3 Teaching Literacy through using Achieve 3000
- TL**-PD Teaching Literacy through periodicals

PP – Positive Perception of teaching literacy through social studies

- PP**-CC Fits well with common core requirements
- PP**-ELA A natural fit with ELA instruction
- PP**-TM Provides more time to teach literacy
- PP**-SS Helps students to gain a deeper understanding of Social Studies Content

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NP – Negative Perception of teaching literacy through social studies

NP -TM	Not enough time to cover social studies content and literacy skills
NP -SR	Student resistance to having to learn literacy in social studies class
NP -RS	Not having ample resources to teach literacy through social studies
NP -TR	Not having ample training to teach literacy through social studies

N Needs

N -T	Need for training
N -O	Need to observe skilled practitioners
N -S	Needs related to scheduling
N -M	Need for materials

PO – Perceived Obstacles

PO -SR	Student resistance
PO -TR	Teacher resistance
PO -NT	Not enough time

The development of initial codes took place by determining the “broadest categories imaginable” (Wolcott, 2009, p.37). The codes were developed inductively. Doing so was consistent with the study’s grounded theory approach. All codes were linked with portions of data from the four interviews that were conducted. The codes represent recurring themes that have clearly emerged from the data. I am pleased to note that these themes link directly to the overall research questions that I hoped to answer. The coding process acted as a precursor to

determining meaning once the data was organized into codes (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996 p.46-47).

The inductive research orientation of this study has led to the ongoing identification of emergent patterns (Patton, 2002, p. 468). Analyzing and theorizing took place in tandem as theory and meaning were developed (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p.139). Description and analysis have “melded” on an ongoing basis (Wolcott, 2009, p.31).

The use of Dedoose in data analysis was invaluable in initially identifying these themes and patterns, which ultimately lead to meaning. The use of this computer generated program not only facilitated efficiency but as well allowed for data manipulation and display (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p.170-181). I utilized Dedoose to determine which visual displays would best illustrate my research findings. As Miles and Huberman note, visual displays are of great value as an integral part of qualitative research. They have been utilized by me both as a data analysis tool and to assist me in reaching conclusions.

I well understand the biases that I hold as I endeavored in this data analysis process. I am an experienced social studies teacher and a doctoral student with a concentration in social studies. I was mindful to acknowledge these biases while engaging in data analysis and while drawing preliminary conclusions (Agar, 1980, p.42). While the nature of this project resulted in some inherent degree of subjectivity, confronting my biases as part of the analysis process minimized this and is consistent with positivist research methods in general (Angen, 2000, p.379). A threat to validity that I was mindful of while analyzing the data is the issue of trust as a potential threat to validity (Magolda, 2000, p. 144-145).

I have constructed a “chain of interpretations” based on the analysis of the data collected from the interviews. In doing so, I was not striving for positivist truth, but for a better

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phenomenological understanding of the perceptions held by elementary social studies teachers (Angen, 2000, p.390). As part of this data analysis, the goal was to be able to use the data to generalize to a theory, and not to a specific population (Firestone, 1993, p.17).

Following each interview, I engaged in brief contact summaries for the purpose of determining my initial thoughts regarding the meaning of the interview (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.51) I also generated brief memos for the purpose of taking a step back from the coding process at times when larger themes began to emerge (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.72-74).

Pilot Study - Findings

The strongest needs that teachers expressed were to have access to high quality nonfiction reading materials and to be able to observe skilled practitioners (or peers) teaching literacy through social studies and doing it well. Perceived barriers included not receiving ample training, not having enough quality nonfiction materials to draw from, and potential student resistance to engaging in literacy activities during social studies lessons. Teacher perceptions - as reported by them - on the issue of teaching literacy through social studies - were generally positive and optimistic. They essentially expressed that an integrative approach was a good fit that would benefit student learning both with regard to literacy skill development and gaining a deeper understanding of social studies concepts and content.

An analysis of the data collected from the pilot study suggests that the role of social studies in the elementary classroom, while still subordinate to other tested content areas, may be gaining ground. A limitation of this study is that it is based upon what the teachers reported. I did not observe their practices nor do I know the frequency of these practices. The addition of teacher observations to this dissertation study was designed to address this threat to data validity.

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The pilot study interview data strongly suggest that those teachers were embarking on various forms of an integration approach. As accountability in ELA has drawn in social studies because of the focus on nonfiction, informational texts, the “minimal role” of social studies may well be evolving into a much higher instructional priority for teachers. The research literature points to the existence of a disconnect between social studies and other content areas. This too, may be evolving in a way that specifically integrates ELA and social studies instruction, at least for this small group of teachers. Consistent with Holloway and Chiodo’s 2009 study, the research participants viewed social studies instruction as having a much higher instructional priority than what the generally accepted body of research would suggest. At this research site, an instructional paradigm already existed that supported the position that literacy skills can and should be taught through social studies lessons at the elementary level.

An analysis of the data collected in the pilot study confirmed several tendencies of the lived experiences of elementary social studies teachers. The teachers expressed concerns that the quality of curricula available to facilitate engaging instruction is limited, as is the ability of most elementary teachers to deliver quality content specific instruction without strong support through high quality materials and training. Also highly consistent with the research literature is that teachers in this study identified little district level professional development that specifically pertains to teaching literacy through elementary social studies. Several teachers made “the leap” in applying generic training related to nonfiction, informational texts to their social studies instruction. While this has value, teacher responses indicate that more content specific training related to teaching literacy through social studies would have much greater value. Also consistent with the research literature, elementary teachers in this study were not social studies content specialists, which makes them reliant on high quality, easily accessible teaching

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materials. The result of this reality is also consistent with the research literature in that there is indeed an over reliance on textbooks. Some teachers were unaware of the inferior quality of the textbook as a resource while others were admittedly aware and had a strong wish to have access to better quality materials without having to research/locate them. This was the case both because of time constraints and because of a lack of content knowledge that they perceived would make it difficult for them to select high quality materials on their own.

The teachers who participated in the pilot study reported an overwhelmingly positive outlook in regards to teaching literacy through social studies. Not only were they willing to teach literacy through social studies at the elementary level, they were already doing so in earnest. Beyond that, they expressed what appeared to be a sincere goal to enhance their skills in delivering that instruction. They were humble in their self-recognition of lacking content specific expertise. They were candid that in lacking content specific expertise, it is difficult for them to locate quality, nonfiction informational texts on their own. All of the respondents indicated that being able to observe a skilled practitioner was the strongest and most valuable support that could be provided to them.

The data collected from the pilot study suggest that school leaders and professional development providers should provide specific, targeted adult learning experiences related to teaching literacy through social studies. Teachers should be provided with a repository of high quality nonfiction, informational texts that are content rich and appropriate for the social studies content area. Professional development should include skilled practitioner observation as a central focus.

The pilot study provided data that suggests further research could include related questions that target specific content and teaching a particular literacy skill. For example,

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teachers can be interviewed regarding their perceived needs and barriers to teaching inferencing (a specific literacy skill) through nonfiction, informational texts that pertain to the three branches of government in the United States (a specific content related topic).

There were threats to validity in the pilot study. The findings of the pilot study are limited in their generalizability. This is true because of the qualitative orientation of the study and the small sample size. Further, my positionality as a supervisor (although not directly over the research participants) may have acted as a threat to validity as well. Still, the study accomplished what it was designed to do. The conclusions of the pilot study can and should be used to better understand teacher perceptions of teaching literacy through social studies. Any researcher, policy maker, school leader, or professional development provider interested in this phenomenon will find these data and conclusions useful in better understanding the phenomenon and in designing adult learning opportunities intended to provide teacher training in this area. This dissertation project was designed to gain a deeper and more meaningful phenomenological understanding than the initial pilot study could provide.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Grounded Theory Approach

The methodology of the pilot study proved largely effective in addressing the research questions. Patterns and themes were identified through an analysis of the data. The grounded theory approach allowed me to develop theories based on an analysis of emergent patterns. The pilot study served as a highly effective means to test out what would evolve into the methodology for the dissertation project. Although the dissertation project is a qualitative study, I knew that interviewing a larger number of teachers across an increased number of grades (3-5 as opposed to only grade 4, as was the case in the pilot study) would provide a richer and deeper meaning to the dissertation study. It was further determined that by observing teachers delivering literacy instruction through social studies content, more data could be collected that would further enhance my ability as a researcher to gain a better phenomenological understanding of teacher perceptions as they relate to teaching literacy skills through social studies content. This was true for the inductive nature of the coding scheme. It worked well. Yet I learned that the more specific and detailed the coding scheme could become, based on the development of more numerous and detailed parent, child, grandchild, etc. codes, the more targeted and refined my analysis could become. From a methodological standpoint, this was a lesson that I took away from the pilot study as well. This is reflected by the development (in the actual dissertation) of a grounded theory based, inductive coding scheme that bares some resemblance to the coding scheme in the pilot project but it is much deeper and richer in overall size (as measured by the sheer number of codes) and by complexity and specificity of the codes themselves. The pilot study served as a “mini dissertation” in that all of the methodologies put into place during that study were present in the methodology of the actual dissertation study. It was a starting point. I

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implemented a grounded theory approach in exploring the research questions. As data were collected, it was analyzed on an ongoing basis. After deep analysis of the data collected, theories were generated that address each of the research questions. I did not enter into the research project having already generated preliminary theories in regards to *what I believe* to be teacher perceptions about teaching literacy through social studies. Consistent with Creswell's conception of conducting grounded theory research, I was committed to, "...set aside, as much as possible, theoretical ideas or notions so that the analytic, substantive theory can emerge." (p.89) An inductive approach to data analysis and the generation of theories took place that is consistent with the defining features of grounded theory as described in the research literature. I focused on the process of teaching literacy through social studies content and the perceptions that teachers hold relative to that process. Memoing, data collection in a variety of forms, and data analysis were utilized in order to generate theories. The data analysis was consistent with what Creswell refers to as a "zigzag process" (p 86) in that analysis *did not only take place* at the conclusion of data collection. This was an ongoing process and took place constantly as more and more data were collected.

A grounded theory approach was an effective method to use in addressing the research questions for this study for several reasons. A review of the professional literature reflects that no existing theory specifically accounts for the perceptions of elementary teachers relative to teaching literacy through social studies content. The questions in this study were designed to focus on understanding the lived experiences of the subjects relative to the process of teaching literacy through social studies. Interviews (primarily) and field observations (secondarily) were the data collection tools and the analysis proceeded in stages (Creswell, 2013). Further, a grounded theory approach assisted me as a researcher in becoming "...more open minded and

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more context sensitive.” as I relied on the ongoing data analysis to eventually allow me to generate theories (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Context

The research sites included one K-8 school and two 3-5 schools within the same district. For the purposes of this study, the district will be referred to as the “Mayberry Public School District”. There is a general sense of well being in this district. Many of the teaching staff attended a Mayberry school when they were K-12 students. A substantial portion of the parent population likewise were raised and educated in Mayberry. A prevalent trend is for residents to be raised in Mayberry and to later purchase a home in the township so that their children can in turn attend the Mayberry Public Schools. There is a collective sense in the community that Mayberry has great schools. There is a strong sense of tradition in regards to “the way it’s always been” and this has tended to fuel a mild yet palpable hesitancy toward change in general. The Mayberry Public School District is an upper middle class, pre-K-12 school district with an enrollment of just under 4,000 students across eight neighborhood schools. A unique grade level configuration exists that maintains the neighborhood school configuration as follows: Buttercup School, grades K-2; Streamside School (research site), grades K-5; Cashew Street School, grades pre-K-2; Littleton School (Research Site), grades 3-5; Apple Avenue School, grades 3-8 and Mountain Avenue School (Research Site), grades K-8. In addition, Jefferson Avenue School is home to an alternative elementary, middle and high school program. The following Mission Statement guides instruction in all of the district’s schools:

The Mayberry School District promotes Pre K – Grade 12 education as a shared responsibility among students, educators, administrators, parents and community. The Mayberry School District strives to create a safe, caring, and rigorous learning

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environment responsive to the individual needs and interests of our students offering programs of studies consistent with the Common Core State Standards, New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards and 21st Century College and Career Readiness. Central to our programs are relevant, real-world learning experiences that stimulate and encourage curiosity, effective communication, goal setting and problem-solving skills while providing opportunities that promote creativity, self-expression, physical/emotional wellness and an appreciation of diversity. All students are provided with personalized learning experiences and critical thinking and technology skills needed to become thoughtful, responsible and productive citizens making contributions in local and global contexts fostering respect and accountability in all of their actions.

Mayberry employs about 650 staff members at all grade levels. Over 60% of the staff members have earned advanced degrees, including five doctorates. The teacher-to-student ratio is 1:12. Staff development opportunities continue to be a central focus. Since 2000-2001, Mayberry has maintained a professional development school (PDS) relationship with a major University located in New Jersey. The PDS staff is committed to training and nurturing current and future teachers to be skilled professionals who effectively translate theory into practice to guide children toward high levels of learning.

Mayberry is an extremely tight knit community situated close to public transportation that has made it a highly desirable place to live for professionals who commute to New York City. There are just over 23,000 residents with a land area that is just under 5 square miles. 2015 median household income is around \$115K, with a median home value of just under \$430K. The demographic makeup reflects a lack of diversity, as 90% of the population is white. The District Factor Group for the district is an “I”, which reflects relative affluence when compared with

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most other New Jersey districts. The district performs at high levels of academic achievement as reflected by student performance on such external measures as the PARCC assessment. The community is a clear reflection of the microcosm that is the school district. It is an upper, middle class community of educated professionals, many of whom work in and have close connections to New York City, which situates the Mayberry School District as a true bedroom community.

Subject Population and Recruitment

Every third and fourth grade teacher in the Mayberry Public School District who was eligible to participate in this study was invited to do so. I chose to invite these teachers across three elementary schools so that there would be some variation in gender, years of experience, training in literacy and social studies, etc. among the research subjects. However despite this effort, the group itself was made up of participants who were very much alike in many aspects. The subject group reflected a general demographic homogeneity that is reflective of the district student population and the demographic makeup of the township of Mayberry in general. As is the case among the teaching staff, student body, and overall community, the research participants were White and speak English as a first language. The research participants were all female except for one. All of them were experienced elementary school teachers and none were social studies content specialists.

Following IRB approval, I reached out via email to each of the prospective research subjects for the purpose of inviting them to participate in the research. I also met with small groups of teachers who wished to learn more about the project. At these meetings, I provided further details on the research study and distributed consent forms. The teachers were invited to reach back out to me if they were interested in participating in the project. The completion of informed consent documentation took place prior to data collection of any kind. A total of 11

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teachers agreed to participate in the study through an interview, a classroom visitation, or both. 10 of the 11 participated in the interview and a classroom observation while 1 of the 11 participated only in a classroom visitation.

Data Collection

I focused on interviewing and classroom visitations as the primary data collection methods. The teacher interviews provided data that pertained to the specific research questions that I sought to answer. The field notes taken during classroom visitations provided insight as to actual teacher practices related to teaching literacy through social studies. While observing the practices provided meaningful data, the data collected during the interviews were most relevant in directly addressing the research questions. Since the questions focus on *teacher perceptions*, listening carefully to those perceptions via the interview experiences provided a plethora of high quality, relevant data. Interview transcripts and field notes were the forms of data that were collected and analyzed during this grounded theory study. The interview questions were designed to give the research subjects the opportunity to share various aspects of their perceptions that pertain to teaching literacy through social studies. The interview data was audio recorded and transcribed. The interview transcripts were coded using Dedoose. An analysis of those codes led to the development of grounded theories that pertain to the perceptions that teachers hold in regards to teaching literacy through social studies at the elementary level.

Data Analysis

The data analysis plan for this project was based on sound and accepted qualitative methodologies. The interview transcripts and field notes were the main sources of data. Those data were analyzed by identifying key themes and patterns (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p.26). The themes that emerged from the data were as follows:

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1. Teachers perceive a need for access to more and better resources that would facilitate their efforts in teaching literacy through social studies.
2. Teachers perceive a need to have access to content area (social studies) specific textual resources that are leveled in complexity.
3. Teachers perceive a need to have access to a comprehensive set of social studies content area resources that would facilitate the explicit teaching of literacy skills through social studies content and concepts.
4. Teachers perceive a need for professional development that specifically targets how to deliver literacy instruction at the elementary level through social studies content and concepts.
5. Teachers perceive a need to be able to observe other teachers who are skilled in explicitly teaching literacy skills through social studies content at the elementary level.
6. Teachers believe that nonfiction, informational text resources that deal specifically with social studies content and concepts are the conduit through which teaching literacy through social studies takes place.
7. Teachers perceive the social studies textbook to be the default text based resource for the delivery of social studies content in the absence of higher quality sources of nonfiction, informational text.
8. Teachers hold overwhelmingly positive perceptions on teaching literacy skills through social studies content and largely embrace what the research literature refers to as an “integrative approach”.
9. Teachers perceive that explicitly teaching literacy strategies at the elementary level through social studies content and concepts “fits well”.

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10. Teachers perceive that teaching literacy through social studies helps students to develop a deeper and more meaningful understanding of social studies content and concepts.
11. The research participants presented content and concepts to their students that conform to the prevalent elementary social studies narrative of chronological, positive progress over time.

Care was taken to ensure that any “premature excursions” into developing theory did not negatively affect my ability to continue to develop that theory (Wolcott, 2009, p.70). Analysis was interwoven throughout the data collection and coding process (Patton, 2002, p 436.) All interview data was coded using generally accepted protocols pertaining to qualitative research (Miles and Huberman, 1994, 55-71). An interview guide was used as the basis for the questions asked during the interviews (See Appendix A).

An analysis of the data derived from interview transcripts enabled me to develop a comprehensive coding scheme. The coding scheme developed was intended to serve both the purposes of data reduction and data complication (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p.29). Using a grounded theory approach (Patton, 2002, 487-491), parent codes were developed. A further categorical analysis of those parent codes led to the development of child and grandchild codes (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p. 32-42) as follows:

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●	Negative Perception of Teaching Literacy through social studies
▼ ●	Example of Teaching Literacy
●	Teaching Literacy through historical fiction
●	Teaching Literacy through the creation of Venn Diagrams
●	Teaching Literacy Through Close Reading
▼ ●	Teaching Literacy through Non Fiction Text
●	Identifying the main idea
●	Identifying Keywords
●	Author's Purpose
●	Making Predictions
●	Text Features and Structure
▼ ●	Teaching Literacy through Reading/Writing Workshop
●	Post Its
●	Teaching Literacy through a research project
●	Teaching Literacy through a writing assignment
●	Teaching Literacy through an activity
●	Teaching Literacy through asking comprehension questions
●	Teaching Literacy using mentor texts
●	Teaching Literacy through note taking
●	Teaching Literacy through primary sources
●	Teaching Literacy through secondary sources
●	Teaching Literacy through self selected reading
●	Teaching Literacy through small group instruction
●	Teaching Literacy through student generated questions
●	Teaching Literacy using a Social Studies Textbook
●	Teaching Literacy using internet resources
●	Frequency of Teaching Literacy Through Social Studies
▼ ●	Challenges / Needs to teaching Literacy Through Social Studies
●	Need to see quality examples of student projects/work
●	Need More Co-Planning Time
●	Need More Staff/Co-Teaching in Social Studies

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- ▼ Need more/better resources
 - Need Technology Based Resources
 - Need Articles
 - Need Content Specific Materials
 - Need High Interest Texts
 - Need Leveled Texts
 - Need More Non-Fiction texts
 - Don't have time to thoroughly research/ locate high quality materials
 - Need Trade Books
 - Need a binder/web resource that provides "one stop shopping" for lesson plans/materials
 - Need more advanced materials for strongest students
 - Online resources may not be age appropriate
 - Resources not readily available
- ▼ Need more/better teacher training
 - Need to observe teachers who are skilled in teaching literacy through social studies
 - Need support from Principal and Supervisors
 - Need to balance literacy and social studies focus during a lesson/activity
 - Creates another required layer of planning
 - Not Enough Time
 - Not every social studies topic is a good fit for this approach
 - Planning and Preparation is a Challenge
 - Students need additional learning modalities to grasp social studies content and concepts
 - Using multiple non fiction texts requires teachers to expand their content knowledge
 - Weak readers are at a disadvantage
 - Younger students learn content better by more hands on activities
- Past Teacher Trainings / Professional Development
- Positive Perception of Teaching Literacy through Social Studies
 - Literacy strategies lead to stronger comprehension of social studies texts
 - Fits well
 - Helps students to better understand social studies concepts and content
 - Eager to implement but would like to learn more about how to do this well
- ▼ Provides more time on task for English Language Arts
 - Student Application of Literacy Strategies using Social Studies Content
 - Shows students that literacy skills should not be applied in isolation
- Teacher Training

The development of initial codes took place by determining the “broadest categories imaginable” (Wolcott, 2009, p.37). The codes were developed inductively. Doing so was consistent with the study’s grounded theory approach. All codes were linked with portions of the interview data. The codes represent recurring themes and patterns that have clearly emerged from the data. The emergent themes and patterns linked closely to the main research questions.

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The coding process acted as a precursor to determining meaning once the data was organized into codes (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996 p.46-47).

The use of Dedoose in data analysis was invaluable in identifying these themes and patterns, which ultimately lead to meaning. The use of Dedoose as a computer generated program not only facilitated efficiency but as well allowed for data manipulation and display (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p.170-181). Dedoose was used to create the visual displays for this project. As Miles and Huberman (1994) note, visual displays are of great value as an integral part of qualitative research. They have been utilized by me both as a data analysis tool and to assist me in reaching conclusions. The inductive research orientation of this study has led to the ongoing identification of emergent patterns based on the coding of data (Patton, 2002, p. 468). Analyzing and theorizing have taken place in tandem as theory and meaning were developed (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p.139). Description and analysis were “melded” on an ongoing basis (Wolcott, 2009, p.31).

Following each interview, I engaged in brief contact summaries for the purpose of determining my initial thoughts regarding the meaning of the interview (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.51). I also generated brief memos for the purpose of taking a step back from the coding process at times when larger themes began to emerge (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.72-74).

Researcher Role

The research participants were aware that I am a school leader, an experienced social studies teacher, and a doctoral candidate with a strong research interest in social studies. I have been mindful to acknowledge these realities as potential sources of a power imbalance as data was collected through the teacher interviews and classroom visitations. My position as a supervisor may have affected the level of candor that subjects were willing to share due to this power imbalance. The subjects may have been hesitant to share certain ideas with me that could

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be construed as being critical of their school, administration, district, etc. I am also concerned that knowing that I am interested in social studies may have influenced the answers that they provided in regards to how they feel about teaching literacy through social studies. Perhaps they would have been more willing to share information that is critical of social studies (or of teaching literacy through social studies) as a field if my positionality was more neutral. Safeguards were put in place in order to minimize these power imbalances as they had the potential to become threats to validity.

Validity

I well understand the biases that I hold and have been mindful to acknowledge these biases while engaging in data analysis and while drawing preliminary conclusions (Agar, 1980, p.42). While the nature of this project generates some inherent degree of subjectivity, confronting my biases as part of the analysis process minimized this and is consistent with positivist research methods in general (Angen, 2000, p.379). I did not collect any data from my own school, nor did I collect data from anyone that I hold supervisory authority over. I took great care to avoid sharing my perspectives on any of the issues related to my research questions so as to avoid unintentionally influencing the subjects into telling me what they think I wanted to hear, or from doing what they may think I want them to do during the classroom visitations. A threat to validity that I was mindful of while analyzing the data is the issue of trust. (Magolda, 2000, p. 144-145). I have constructed a “chain of interpretations” based on the analysis of the data collected from the interviews. In doing so, I am not striving for positivist truth, but for a better phenomenological understanding of the perceptions held by elementary social studies teachers (Angen, 2000, p.390).

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The methodology of this dissertation is consistent with what Patton outlines as some essential safeguards to validity in qualitative research. This research design embraces subjectivity as a means to gain deeper understandings. In this case, the specific phenomenon is teacher perceptions that pertain to teaching literacy through social studies. The focus of the study lies more in developing deep understandings than it does in creating broadly generalizable theories (p 546). Further, Patton recognizes the importance of credibility as a key element in the validity of qualitative research. This proposal is credible on several levels. The research design adheres to widely accepted and established qualitative techniques. Credibility of the actual researcher is key as well. Having completed all required Ed.D coursework in research methods and having demonstrated ability and understanding in these methods contribute to my credibility as a researcher. I firmly believe in the value of qualitative inquiry (p. 552-553). The use of data triangulation in this proposal yet again reflects a commitment to strive for the greatest degree of validity possible. Two different types of data and data collection methods have been incorporated into this research design for the express purpose of allowing data triangulation to take place.

Provisions for Protection of Private, Identifiable Information

Confidentiality has been protected in more than one way. All hard copy data has been stored at a home office. All electronic data, including interview transcripts, are maintained on a password protected cloud based platform that only the principal researcher will be able to access. Electronic data stored in the cloud on Google Drive is password protected and can only be accessed by the principal researcher. Pseudonyms have been used on all collected data and in all data that appears as part of this dissertation. The data will be maintained in the hopes that further analysis at a later time will lead to the creation of articles that will be submitted to peer reviewed journals for publication.

Chapter 4 - Findings

Teacher Perceptions

The research participants expressed generally positive and optimistic perceptions about teaching literacy through social studies, yet they freely shared what they perceive as obstacles and barriers for them to be able to do this and to do it well. By analyzing their perceptions on both ends of this spectrum, I was able to identify patterns and themes that pertain to the beliefs that these teachers hold about teaching literacy through social studies at the elementary level. These trends and patterns speak directly to the research questions. I identified the following 10 themes and patterns in the data:

1. The research participants perceived a need for access to more and better resources that would facilitate their efforts in teaching literacy through social studies.
2. The research participants perceived a need to have access to content area (social studies) specific textual resources that are leveled in complexity.
3. The research participants perceived a need to have access to a comprehensive set of social studies content area resources that would facilitate the explicit teaching of literacy skills through social studies content and concepts.
4. The research participants perceived a need for professional development that specifically targets how to deliver literacy instruction at the elementary level through social studies content and concepts.
5. The research participants perceived a need to be able to observe other teachers who are skilled in explicitly teaching literacy skills through social studies content at the elementary level.

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6. The research participants believed that nonfiction, informational text resources that deal specifically with social studies content and concepts are the conduit through which teaching literacy through social studies takes place.
7. The research participants perceived the social studies textbook to be the default text based resource for the delivery of social studies content in the absence of higher quality sources of nonfiction, informational text.
8. The research participants held overwhelmingly positive perceptions on teaching literacy skills through social studies content and largely embrace what the research literature refers to as an “integrative approach”.
9. The research participants perceived that explicitly teaching literacy strategies at the elementary level through social studies content and concepts “fits well”.
10. The research participants perceived that teaching literacy through social studies helps students to develop a deeper and more meaningful understanding of social studies content and concepts.
11. The research participants presented content and concepts to their students that conform to the prevalent elementary social studies narrative of chronological, positive progress over time.

The Need for More/Better Teaching Resources and Materials

The research participants perceived a need for access to more resources that would facilitate their efforts in teaching literacy through social studies. Not only did these teachers feel that having access to a greater volume of resources was a need, the quality of those resources was of paramount importance. They expressed the need to have more resources and the quality of those resources must represent a leap forward in comparison to the resources that they

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currently have. Examples of resources that these teachers identified include technology based resources, nonfiction articles, content specific materials, high interest student texts and social studies based non fiction, informational texts.

A lack of quality resources was indeed expressed as a limiting factor in a teacher's ability to effectively teach literacy skills through social studies. Colin shared that, "You need the materials to do it...because I don't really have a lot of materials to do that..." Marilyn noted that there certainly are, "...better nonfiction resources that I could be using besides my photocopied pieces that I've had since I started teaching." Julia noted that teaching literacy through social studies can be challenging with her current materials, including the textbook. She stated that, "Not having the proper materials (is challenging)...I personally think the social studies texts are outdated..." Kim concurred that the variable of quality resources can be a limiting factor by sharing that, "I think teachers are pretty good at carrying out lessons when they have the materials that they need to do it...sometimes it's an extremely hard time finding materials to make it happen." Beth cited the importance of having more/better materials by stating that, "...having the materials that we need to implement something like this would be fantastic...We definitely are lacking in nonfiction material for students...we are lacking in lower-level nonfiction social studies related books."

The explicit articulation of needing more/better resources was consistent with what can be implied - that in the absence of high quality materials, the research participants default to using what is available to them. Most often at the elementary level, this comes in the form of social studies textbooks (Brophy, 2009; Holloway and Chiodo, 2009; Haas and Laughlin, 1997). The teacher observations conducted as part of this study also reflect this tendency that is consistent with the existing body of research literature and what these teachers reported during

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their interviews. While they discussed using the textbook as a resource during the interviews, I did not observe the use of textbooks during the classroom visits. During the classroom visits, it was clear to me that these teachers were making good use of the resources that were available to them, but those resources were indeed limited. The classroom visits in this study reflected a reliance on resources of marginal quality. Examples of some resources that were noted by me during the classroom visits include an article that dealt with Native Americans, three worksheets - each of which provided factual information about the New England, Middle, and Southern Colonies, an online fact sheet about the New Jersey State House, a simulation/game of chance that dealt with the age of exploration, a video on landforms, and a photocopied packet of information on New Jersey landforms. What these teachers wanted and need are high quality, content specific, social studies themed non-fiction texts and related resources.

The Need for Leveled, Content Area Text Resources

The research participants expressed the need to have access to content area (social studies) specific textual resources that are leveled in complexity. These teachers shared their perception that in order for students to make gains in literacy skills, they must engage with texts of a complexity that correspond to a student's reading level. While elementary classroom libraries routinely contain leveled texts in a variety of genres, social studies themed texts (especially non-fiction) are grossly underrepresented. These teachers perceived that having social studies resources through which to explicitly teach literacy skills is not enough and that those resources must be diverse in their complexity in order to effectively implement instructional strategies that promote literacy development. This is consistent with the research literature from another perspective as well in that students are motivated to read and comprehend text of increasingly difficult complexity as a result of needing to know more about a topic that greatly

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interests them (Levstik & Barton, 2008g). Colin noted that, "...we would need leveled texts on the same topics, several books on that theme we're talking about..." Marilyn shared that,

...you want students reading on level....social studies that is one size fits all (is insufficient)...we've searched and there's nothing out there...I do have students...that struggle with reading the text and I can't find anything for them...you just see them struggling...and you can't provide them with something (leveled reading) to help them understand it..."

Expecting teachers to explicitly teach literacy through social studies content without providing them with leveled texts to meet student readers at their current reading level is a daunting proposition to say the least. Mary reflected on the default resource of the social studies textbook by commenting that, "...having a large range of (student reading) levels in a social studies class makes it difficult to find text that is accessible to all students, especially when the social studies textbook seems to be written above many of their levels." Julia further noted that at times, "...I need differentiated levels of reading...like (leveled) books or novel work that's related to that subject area, that would be wonderful."

Angelina astutely pointed out that leveled texts do not only benefit struggling readers, but that in fact having this as a resource enables teachers to meet all students where they are in terms of skill. This is true as well for those students who are able to read and comprehend texts that are above grade level. This can lead to an effective, integrative approach that focuses on teaching literacy through social studies that will likely result in incremental growth for students at all reading levels, including advanced students. She continued to explain that,

I know I have good stuff for my lower level students. I would like to have good stuff (materials) for my middle-of-the-road, average, my lower groups...The students that

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understand the social science concepts are strong readers and could really be doing something enriching. I don't always know where to go to get something (for them) ...I don't want to make it seem like a punishment because they're stronger in those skills...I don't have the resources to do leveled reading with my class.”

Beth astutely pointed out that leveled texts that correspond to student interest leads to increased student choice and motivation in being receptive to learning literacy skills through social studies content and concepts. She further noted that, “I don't have the resources to do leveled reading with my class...So I would like to see more low-level high interest Social Studies books on the topics that the students would be interested in learning more about.”

Leveled texts were not noted at all in the classroom visits that I conducted throughout the course of this study. Student ability to effectively engage in the use of non-fiction texts is critical in the development of reading comprehension ability (Brophy and Alleman, 2009). The ability to comprehend at an optimal level can't take place unless students engage with texts that are appropriately leveled for them. Brophy and Alleman (2008) and Levstik (2009) found that elementary students express a strong sentiment of “needing to know” when working with non-fiction narratives such as historical biographies. Students are motivated to read and comprehend text of increasingly difficult complexity as a result of needing to know more about a topic that greatly interests them (Levstik & Barton, 2008g). It is difficult if not impossible for this to take place without access to leveled texts. Carlsson-Paige and Lantieri note that, “Throughout the elementary school years, a child's ability to handle increasingly complex ideas grows slowly....” (Carlsson-Paige and Lantieri, 2005, p. 115) This growth can't be accommodated and fostered through a one size fits all approach to social studies content area literacy resources. The teacher

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perception of needing leveled text is well situated within their experiences, the existing research literature, and the everyday reality of classroom life.

The Need for “One Stop Shopping” - A Comprehensive Teacher Resource Set

The research participants perceived a need for a comprehensive set of resources that would facilitate the explicit teaching of literacy skills through social studies content and concepts. During my classroom visits, I witnessed an array of resources that were used to teach literacy skills through social studies content and concepts. They included an article that dealt with Native Americans, three worksheets - each of which provided factual information about the New England, Middle, and Southern Colonies, an online fact sheet about the New Jersey State House, a simulation/game of chance that dealt with the age of exploration, a video on landforms, and a photocopied packet of information on New Jersey landforms. These resources were not part of any preorganized compilation designed to provide teachers with easy access to high quality materials. In reality, they were located by individual teachers and or shared among teachers. Further, their overall quality was limited.

Providing teachers with a budget and permission to research and locate high quality resources is not enough for two main reasons. The first deals with time constraints and competing interests. Teachers are posed with “tough decisions” as to how to allocate time to social studies instruction while experiencing the pressures of high stakes testing in ELA and Mathematics (Heafner and Fitchett, 2012). Because of high stakes testing, teachers are often pressured into allocating more instructional time in Math and Language Arts and less in social studies (Sunal and Sunal, 2007-2008). While finding the time to teach social studies alone at the elementary level is challenging enough, finding the time to engage in thoroughly researching

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high quality resources that would facilitate teaching literacy through social studies content and concepts is perceived by teachers as exponentially more difficult and challenging.

The second reason deals with the reality that most elementary teachers are not content area specialists. They often lack the content area knowledge and or confidence that would assist them in selecting appropriate social studies themed texts through which they could effectively deliver literacy instruction. Teacher education programs fail to adequately prepare elementary teachers to deliver high quality social studies instruction (Holloway and Chiodo 2009, and Tanner, 2008). Elementary teachers often resort to instructional methods that they most recently experienced as students themselves (Thorton, 2005, p.79.) In the absence of access to high quality materials (that could indeed be made accessible through some kind of binder/electronic resource) teachers will inevitably slide back toward relying on the social studies textbook. Elementary social studies teachers, "...are not single field specialists. Elementary teachers juggle many competing claims for attention..."(Levstik & Barton, 2008a, p.96).

The perceived need for access to a "one stop shopping" resource or set of resources as expressed by the research participants is pragmatic and understandable. They perceived a need for access to high quality, social studies themed texts and like resources that would allow them to engage their students in explicit literacy skill development. Amy noted that organization within such a resource would enhance its usefulness by sharing that, "...some kind of central repository, that would help out, or articles that would help out or web sites that are safe for the kids...maybe some kind of compilation of all of that broken down by topic would be really helpful." Julia was in favor of such a resource, stating that "I would like somebody to give me all that... (created) by someone who is very knowledgeable in that field...I need a ring binder that provides me with these resources..." Kim cited the need to have access to such a prepared set of

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resources by stating that, “....One stop shopping...You know when someone tells you how to do it and gives it to you it's very easy to do that...We can't spend our time searching for it...materials that are (part of an) up-to-date a curriculum...bringing it together in one place...” Elementary teachers deliver instruction across the widest scope of content areas within the K-12 grade range. Given this reality and the fact that they are not social studies content specialists, The research participants strongly perceived the need for access to a centralized compilation of high quality resources in order to effectively teach literacy skills through social studies content and concepts.

The Need for More/Better Teacher Training

The research participants expressed a need for professional development that specifically targets how to deliver literacy instruction at the elementary level through social studies content and concepts. While every teacher in this study expressed a positive willingness to implement an integrative approach, it was clear that they perceived that professional development in this area is scarce, both in terms of what they have received in the past (if any at all) and what they perceived would likely be offered in the future. Colin expressed the need for more training and shared that he has received little if any to date and shared that, “I would need someone to tell (me), to give me tips on how to start...I took a class 9 years ago...but I barely remember it...” Marilyn expressed a similar sentiment and shared that, “I haven't had any formal training through the district or the school or workshops or university...” Mary described both the need for more professional development and the lack thereof that she has experienced in her teaching career by stating that, “...it benefits teachers to learn many different ways of how to incorporate literacy in social studies...professional development is not as common in social studies and we haven't had much in my 10 years of teaching...” Julia expressed similar thoughts and shared that, “...some type of training...what (content) is important or how we're going to go about teaching them how

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to understand what they read..I haven't had any training.” Kim likewise shared that, “...I don't have any training in it through my district or through any workshops at a University...I've been here eighteen years and there's always been talk about it...” Karen would value workshops that could, “...enrich how I can deliver my instruction...But... I haven't been on many workshops.” Angelina raised the point that she *is not even aware of the kinds of training that may be available* by sharing that, “I'm sure I don't know what's offered in terms of training. I mean social studies coaches and PD on meaningful ways to infuse different skills into social studies (would be beneficial)...Our district has not provided specific training.” Beth similarly yearned for more professional development opportunities and shared that, “I think any sort of training that would help me to integrate social studies into literacy would be helpful...Unfortunately I don't think I've ever had any such training...”

Since Reading and Writing Workshop is an instructional approach that all of these teachers have been trained in through their school/district, many applied that training *to the elementary social studies setting on their own*. This is extremely beneficial given that explicit training on how to teach literacy skills through social studies content and concepts has been virtually nonexistent.

Kim made use of content about Native Americans to engage the students in a classroom discussion that pertained to nonfiction text features. Students identified main ideas, conferenced with each other, and generated questions that they used to read with a purpose. Amy presented her students with a graphic organizer that was used to collect and organize information related to the New England, Middle, and Southern Colonies. Mary utilized an electronic resource on the New Jersey State House for students to identify and define key terms within text. Angelina's students and Karen's students engaged in evidence based journal writing as a literacy component

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to a simulation that dealt with the age of exploration. Marilyn's students engaged in writing pen pal letters that required students to use geographic evidence to describe landforms in New Jersey. Suzy and Jane engaged their students in a project where each student researched a state, wrote and published a book on it, and presented their work to classmates and family at a symposium. All of these examples are standard instructional approaches within the Reading and Writing Workshop framework. It is encouraging that these teachers made this "leap" on their own. They would be able to do much more with explicit training on teaching literacy skills through social studies concepts and content.

The perceptions shared by the research participants with regard to the need for more and better training - and the realization that they have received virtually no training on how to teach literacy through social studies - is highly consistent with the research literature. The body of existing research literature that pertains to elementary social studies suggests that there is little professional development provided to/available for teachers at all in this area, let alone with a level of specificity that deals specifically with teaching literacy through social studies content and concepts (Brophy & Alleman, 2008, 2009). Teacher education programs can't be relied upon as a source of such training (Holloway & Chiodo, 2009 and Tanner, 2008). Individual teacher education courses don't provide adequate training either (Thorton, 2005). The fact that elementary social studies teachers are largely content area generalists (Levstik & Barton, 2008a) compounds the problem. While the teachers in this study are posed with "tough decisions" as to how to allocate time for social studies instruction (Heafner and Fitchett, 2012) they expressed that they valued elementary social studies and focusing on teaching literacy skills through social studies content and concepts. They simply expressed the need for more and better training to be able to do this and to do it well.

“Show Me” - The need to observe skilled practitioners in action

Every single research participant expressed the need to observe a skilled practitioner teaching literacy through social studies content and concepts. It was articulated as the first professional development resource, both in terms of sequence (when it was identified by the research participants) and in terms of priority. Observing a skilled practitioner was universally perceived by the research participants as the most effective means of learning how to explicitly teach literacy skills through social studies content and concepts. The same was true for research participants who took part in the pilot study. Without exception, each of those teachers as well expressed the need to observe a classroom lesson (or lessons) as an effective means to learn more about how to deliver targeted literacy instruction through social studies concepts and content. The research participants wanted to be able to actually conduct classroom visitations where they can directly witness and learn how this takes place and what it looks like in various forms by being able to visit classrooms led by a skilled practitioner. Colin shared that, “If I can see someone else doing it, that would be a good thing...watching and getting someone who is an expert on doing whatever you're trying to learn, in this case literacy integration with social studies.” Marilyn shared that, “I wish someone would...show me how...” Mary spoke of the value of such observations by sharing that, “I think having experts come and show you what things you can do that you probably don't even know you can do would just give us a different perspective on how to incorporate literacy.” Amy further noted that, “I feel like it would be helpful...we could visit them and see what they're doing...(without this perspective) I don't even know if we are doing a good job.” Kim noted the value of modeling as an instructional tool in general. She explained that, “Anything that is going to model it for us...a demo lesson or two would be nice...I feel like if you show them once or twice in a demo lesson and have a discussion

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about what you're looking for and how to go about doing it...that's what teachers always need to (see) demo lessons...” Beth shared that it would help to observe integrated lessons (where literacy skills are explicitly taught) not only with social studies but with other content areas as well by stating that, “I could emulate that and include even more subjects into literacy, such as science....observing somebody actually teaching this effectively where they are integrating the two subjects would be helpful.”

It is clear that there is a need to increase professional development opportunities in elementary social studies in general (Brophy & Alleman, 2008, 2009). The research literature and the data collected in this study suggest that this is true for both the scope/diversity of professional development offerings and the frequency with which these offerings are made available to teachers. It is equally clear from these research participants that professional development that specifically targets teaching literacy skills through social studies content and concepts is needed in order for teachers to do this and to do it well.

Within that theme emerged a sub-theme, a strongly perceived reality that the best way to do this is to provide teachers with the opportunity to observe a skilled practitioner effectively delivering literacy instruction through social studies content and concepts. I was intrigued that this theme did not require a “teasing” of the data. Rather, it lept out both in the data analysis of the main body of this work and during the pilot study as well. It is worth noting that the research participants placed a high value on the strategy of using social studies content and concepts as a vehicle to teach literacy skills, in contrast to how the research literature identifies social studies as a low priority in general (Tanner, 2008). Granted, the teachers knew that as a researcher I am interested in social studies. Still, their positive feelings on implementing an integrative approach combined with (and perhaps more importantly) their actual efforts - suggests a genuine urgency

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to learn more. They expressed that they had been implementing some variation of an integrative approach well before they were ever contacted by me to participate in this research study.

All of that said, the reasons why the research participants were so adamant about the need to “see it in action” are because (1) they have not been trained in an integrative approach and (2) they lack confidence in having adequate content knowledge in social studies in order to do this well. Coupled with this are social studies curricula that provide little support and guidance for an integrative approach (Heafner and Fitchett, 2012).

There is a paradoxical reality here in that elementary curricular approaches tend to present social studies as *disconnected from other content areas* (Barton, 2008). While elementary teachers are largely specialists in reading instruction, they are typically content generalists without a robust content area knowledge in social studies (Levstik & Barton, 2008a). This contributes to a lack of self confidence in both the scope and depth of their content related knowledge. Despite the implicit pressure to focus away from elementary social studies (Sunal and Sunal, 2007-2008), the research participants wanted to learn more about an integrative approach. It is something that they viewed as a win-win scenario. They strongly perceived being able to observe skilled practitioners as the single, strongest support that will enable them to effectively deliver literacy instruction through social studies content and concepts.

The Role of Nonfiction, Informational Texts in Teaching Literacy Through Social Studies

The research participants believed that nonfiction, informational text resources that deal specifically with social studies content and concepts are the conduit through which teaching literacy through social studies takes place. The use of nonfiction, informational texts was noted in some form in each of the classroom observations. Examples of resources that were noted by me during the classroom visits include an article that dealt with Native Americans, three

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worksheets - each of which provided factual information about the New England, Middle, and Southern Colonies, an online fact sheet about the New Jersey State House, a simulation/game of chance that dealt with the age of exploration, a video on landforms, and a photocopied packet of information on New Jersey landforms.

While the research participants cited historical fiction and secondary sources such as social studies textbooks as prevalent in their current repository of resources, they identified access to nonfiction, informational texts within the content area as a key variable in being able to explicitly teach literacy skills through social studies content.

Their classroom libraries were well stocked with literature resources, many of which are varied in complexity to meet a range of student reading levels. Some of these resources touch on social studies content and themes through historical fiction, but these are few and far between and their historical accuracy is always in question. These classroom libraries are sorely lacking in the kinds of content based nonfiction, informational texts that would facilitate teaching literacy through social studies.

This theme emerged as a seriously limiting factor (in terms of teacher perception and in reality) in the ability of the research participants to explicitly teach literacy skills through social studies content and concepts. Colin shared that, “I use nonfiction informational text to help kids learn literacy skills...a lot of lessons to do with discovering the main idea...” Marilyn noted that while students can also learn literacy skills through historical fiction, non fiction texts are a better (and scant) resource. She explained that, “Kids can learn from nonfiction texts and historical fiction...I noticed that my students doing their nonfiction reading unit were still struggling with reading nonfiction and I thought this is a really great place (social studies lessons) to kind of keep reviewing those features ...for nonfiction.” Mary underscored the importance of not only

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having access to nonfiction texts but that access to *multiple texts on the same topic* is important for students in learning literacy skills through social studies. She explained that, “..it's very important to incorporate different informational texts because part of our reading skills is synthesizing information and realizing that when you read informational text you must get information from different sources to get a complete picture...and not through only one lens.”

The research literature suggest that elementary students develop little sense of the interpretive nature of historical/social studies issues unless this is explicitly taught (Levstik & Barton, 2008c) and doing so through the lens of varied non fiction texts on the same topic/event/figure works toward this end. Karen echoed the importance of student access to multiple perspectives on the same nonfiction topic by sharing that,

...this year we read two different articles from the Patriots and the Redcoats articles from each perspective. It was written (from the perspective of) what happened and some of them were in agreement with the side that did not win...it made them think and they had to keep reading it again to determine what does that really mean?

Julia reflected on a recent lesson that she taught, using a nonfiction text. She explicitly delivered literacy instruction through content area nonfiction resources that dealt with Native American tribes. She detailed this experience by stating that,

...this actually helps students learn social studies (content) better because they're taking ownership of the learning through their own reading comprehension...it's very easy to do it within a social studies lesson...readers ask questions before, during, and after reading so we were practicing that by asking questions about the Native Americans of the Plains before reading about them...the students brainstormed some questions they had hoped to be answered in the reading and then they went off to read.”

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For Julia, this lesson represented the win-win nature of an integrative approach. The students applied pre-reading and active reading comprehension strategies while engaging with a content area, nonfiction text. Students presumably walked away from that lesson with a stronger content knowledge and an enhanced ability (or at least solid practice) in pre reading and active reading comprehension strategies. Kim reflected on a similar lesson and shares that, “...I really felt like after this lesson that I did a lot of good talking about the reading (nonfiction text) they learned about Native Americans. I feel like today I covered reading and social studies thoroughly today, where social studies usually gets bumped out when you start to run out of time...” Angelina further supported the infusion of nonfiction texts and shares that,

...you need the nonfiction, informational texts to provide the students with the necessary information they need to then apply it in a deeper way..It’s a good thing to use nonfiction materials to learn about history so it's connecting the two subjects (literacy instruction and content area material) really nicely... If the students explore a nonfiction book, they are learning social studies (content) while still working on the reading and literacy piece...”

When discussing the use of nonfiction texts, Beth reiterated the value of having access to texts that are leveled by complexity by sharing that, “It helps the students. Nonfiction texts, as long as they're on the student’s level...”

The research participants held a strong perception that the use of nonfiction, informational texts is a critical variable in teaching literacy through social studies content and concepts. This belief aligns closely with the existing research literature. The use of non-fiction, informational texts at the elementary level promotes strengthening of literacy skills and progress

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toward content area mastery. These texts are an invaluable resource for teachers who embark on an integrative approach to social studies instruction (Levstik & Barton, 2008e).

There is great instructional value in presenting multiple non fiction texts to students that present conflicting perspectives. Teaching students to make sense of these diverging points of view on a topic, idea, and/or historical event builds their capacity both to engage in historical thinking and to strengthen their literacy skills (VanSledright, 2010). Working with nonfiction texts should indeed be an important priority at the elementary level (Callison, 2013) and it clearly was for the research participants. They held a strong perception that the use of non-fiction texts is critical in the development of reading comprehension ability, which is consistent with findings in the research literature (Brophy and Alleman, 2009).

The research participants' perception of the importance of engaging in non-fiction texts is consistent with the research literature in that the frequent reading of nonfiction, informational texts among students leads to larger and more meaningful literacy gains than does a non-integrated approach (in either social studies or language arts alone) that emphasizes literature. Focusing on literacy skills through non fiction text situates elementary learners to become astute discerners of information (VanSledright, 2010). Engaging students in thought about how nonfiction texts are organized along with an analysis of their form and function fosters meaningful student growth (Segall, 2010). Students benefit not only from engaging in these content related, non-fiction texts but from analyzing them critically (Hamston and Murdoch, 1996). The research participants believed that engaging students in nonfiction, informational texts within the social studies content area moves forward literacy specific and content related goals in the classroom. This strong perception that they hold is indeed consistent with the research literature and across the lived experience that each research participant expressed.

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When I visited each participant's classroom during a literacy-social studies integrative lesson, it was clear that the beliefs of teachers were consistent with the observed practices during those visits. There was an emphasis on utilizing content area non fiction texts to explicitly deliver literacy instruction. Key instructional approaches that were identified in the context of engaging students in nonfiction, informational texts included identifying the main idea, keywords, author's purpose, making predictions, and analyzing text features and structure.

During the interviews, teachers identified numerous other ways to deliver an integrative approach that included research projects, writing assignments, activities, asking/answering comprehension questions, mentor texts, note taking, primary and secondary source use, self selected reading, small group instruction, student generated questions, and use of internet resources. Since Reading and Writing Workshop is an instructional approach that all of these teachers have been trained in through their school/district, many adopted the instructional approaches learned originally in an English/Language Arts (ELA) setting *into the social studies setting on their own*. This is evidence of the philosophical commitment that these teachers hold and their belief that teaching literacy through social studies content and concepts is an effective instructional approach. Even with a dearth of resources, lack of training, and their individual content area limitations, these teachers consistently displayed self efficacy in transferring their knowledge/training in Reading and Writing Workshop in ways that would improve their practice in teaching literacy through social studies.

Role of the Social Studies Textbook

The research participants perceived the social studies textbook to be the default text based resource for the delivery of social studies content. They grudgingly viewed the textbook as a source of nonfiction, informational text related to social studies in general. *These teachers have*

no love for the textbook as a resource, yet in a sense it represents “the devil that they know”. It should be noted that the classroom visits I conducted were scheduled in advance. The teachers knew the day and time I would be visiting. While use of the textbook was mentioned in the teacher interviews, I did not observe the textbook being used in any of the classroom visits.

The research participants clearly articulated that there is a dearth of alternative sources of content specific nonfiction, informational texts that are available to them. Marilyn reflected on the role of the textbook by sharing that, “We still have the grey 1980 book that we still use because we don't have anything better. I felt like I had that when I was a kid and when I was in 4th grade and not a lot of it changed...” In both respects, she may well be correct. Mary explained that the “one size fits all” non-leveled nature of textbooks makes teaching literacy challenging. She shared that,

If we only use the social studies textbook, the students are getting a very limited view of the social studies concepts so I try to incorporate as many different informational texts on different levels for each topic we study...the fourth grade text is on a fourth grade level, which not all my students are reading at...”

Amy makes use of the textbook at times but was quick to point out its limitations. She stated that, “Your social studies textbook, (It’s an appropriate resource for) maybe about 5% of the kids...” Julia was equally critical and shared that “I personally think the social studies texts are outdated and they're written on a high level for some students...so when I use the social studies textbook I'm pretty much reading to them and hoping that they're following along...”

The research literature reflects a strong consensus that there is an over reliance on textbooks that contain only superficial content and lack any real depth and meaning. (Alleman & Brophy, 2008; Brophy & Alleman, 2009; Levstik & Barton, 2008f). While the research

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participants were critical of social studies textbooks, it was clear that in the absence of other more desirable resources, the textbook is still being used. They certainly did not view textbooks as a very valuable resource, as some research literature suggests (Chapin, 2006). The research participants expressed an awareness that is consistent with the research literature in general in that other resources offer a much richer view of social studies than is the case when relying on a textbook (Turner, 1999). The research participants were well aware of the value of focusing on reading skills through non fiction, informational texts (Callison, 2013). The teachers in this study view the textbook as a necessary evil of sorts. They perceived obvious limitations of the textbook, yet they also grudgingly admit to using the resource in the absence of other higher quality, more readily available resources.

I noticed that teacher perceptions that pertained to the textbook as a less than ideal resource were not predicated on esoteric, philosophical views of the damage that they can inflict. Instead, teachers cited lack of leveling, providing one perspective, and being outdated as the limitations of textbooks as a resource. Largely absent from the logic behind their objections was Evans's conception of textbooks as "a lightning rod" (Evans, 2010) or Van Sledright's contention that textbooks "actually retard the development of historical thinking." (VanSledright, 2010). This may well be because these conceptions of the social studies textbook are begotten from the professional literature that deals specifically with social studies content and pedagogy. As teachers who are not content area specialists, the research participants may simply not have the background content area knowledge to recognize the depth of difficulty and inadequacy of the social studies textbook as an instructional material in the elementary social studies classroom. They do however, understand that there are some serious limitations and that the textbook *should*

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not represent a “go to” resource as they embark on an integrative approach of teaching literacy through social studies.

The research participants clearly expressed that they want more and better resources to pursue an integrative approach to teaching literacy through social studies. They recognized this and they valued this. However, until they have access to better, high quality, nonfiction resources, the textbook will likely maintain its perennial place at the table. This is not what these teachers want nor is it what is in the best interest of students. This is true both for the effective implementation of teaching literacy skills through social studies and from a purist social studies content/pedagogical perspective as well.

Teachers hold overwhelmingly positive perceptions on teaching literacy skills through social studies concepts and content.

The research participants held overwhelmingly positive perceptions on teaching literacy skills through social studies concepts and content. It is much more a matter of providing teachers with the supports that they perceive as necessary in order to do so than it is a matter of establishing a sense of “buy in” among teachers. The teachers in this study wanted to do this and they wanted to do it well.

The research participants were candid and clear in expressing what they perceived to be barriers to teaching literacy through social studies. Yet, these teachers readily expressed a strong willingness to implement an integrative approach and to do so with increased frequency, provided that their perceived obstacles were addressed in ways that would set them free to do so. They believed that the supports that are needed are attainable and within reach, as is their ability to grow in their skill as it pertains to teaching literacy skills through social studies content and concepts.

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These teachers expressed the need to see exemplary lesson plans and student work, more co-planning time, and more co-teaching in social studies. They expressed the need for support from principals and supervisors. They wished to learn more about balancing teaching literacy with social studies content/concepts. These teachers expressed that while an integrative approach creates another layer of planning that requires more time on their part, this time would be well spent because students reap the benefits of enhancing their literacy skills and their content area skills and knowledge. They pointed out that not every social studies topic is best addressed through an integrative approach and that students often require experiencing other learning modalities (either in addition to or in the place of an integrative approach) in order to meaningfully grasp social studies content and concepts. The research participants realized that as a group, elementary teachers are not content specialists in social studies, and that by widening the repertoire of non-fiction reading materials/topics, the teachers in turn will need to expand their content knowledge in order to remain a relevant content related resource for their students. Further, weak readers may be at a disadvantage through a literacy based approach and younger elementary students sometimes gain a stronger content based understanding through more hands on activities such as games and role playing.

Still, the research participants displayed a clear optimism with regard to explicitly teaching literacy skills through social studies content and concepts. This was true both for the positive perceptions that they articulated during the interviews and as well this was palpable to me as an observer during the classroom visits. The research participants believed that using literacy based strategies leads to a deeper and more meaningful understanding of social studies content and concepts. They also believed that an integrative approach strengthens the literacy skills among their students. These teachers were eager to implement an integrative approach and

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in many cases were already attempting to do so in earnest. For those teachers who have already implemented the approach, they expressed a strong need to learn more about how to do it and to do it well. Teachers noted that an integrative approach amounts to increased time in English/Language Arts, which is often elusive to find in elementary teacher schedules. There was a perception that student application of literacy based strategies applied to social studies content has great value for both content areas.

While they did not label an “integrative approach” as it is referred to in the professional literature, in layperson terms The research participants expressed strong support for the same. There are other labels within the research literature that fit well with the integrative approach that these teachers support. “Disciplinary literacy” (Sell, 2017; Binkley, 2011; and Britt, 2017) and “disciplinary specific instruction” (Brugar 2016) are other frameworks that are largely consistent with an integrative approach that was practiced and strongly supported by the research participants.

The research participants expressed that explicitly teaching literacy through social studies was a good fit and that doing so makes strides in students gaining a more meaningful understanding of social studies concepts and content. Mary shared that, “I found out how important it (an integrative approach) is in social studies and it's not something I did my first few years...my team and I try to incorporate as much writing as we can...” Amy’s words epitomized the positive perceptions in regards to an integrative approach that were expressed by the research participants as a whole, further linking the approach with improved student understanding of content related material. She explained that,

I just love it and I feel like it really helps the students not only understand the social studies content...but it totally immerses them in reading and writing...and they get so

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excited about it. Even kids who don't even like writing end up enjoying writing because of the content that we're doing and the content is exciting to them..."

Julia shared that, "I mean I think it's a great thing. I think the kids are excited..." Kim likewise supported the approach, stating that, "...It's beneficial...we want to bring it all together to do a lot of cross curricular (literacy and social studies) activities..." Karen valued this approach as a win-win between literacy goals and content area goals. She stated that, "...if you're having them read things... you still know they're getting a deeper knowledge and you're still getting at it (content area subject matter) because you can have an overarching question that you're trying to help them understand." Angelina strongly advocated for an integrative approach, citing enhanced student skills in literacy and a better understanding of content area knowledge. She stated that,

I want the students to use the skills that they learn in reading to support what they are doing in social studies...I don't know how you could really learn social studies without including some kind of reading skills anyway...it's connecting the two subjects (literacy and social studies) really nicely...Using content area material to teach literacy is a great strategy in all subjects. I don't think that it takes away from social studies at all. I think that if you are using those skills, it's benefiting both subjects...I look at Social Studies as way to reinforce what you're teaching in reading...I feel that all social studies activities need to have some literacy components..."

There was a strong consensus among the research participants that an integrative approach to teaching literacy through social studies is an effective instructional strategy. To a greater or lesser extent, these teachers were already embarking on this approach. All of the teachers expressed an eagerness to learn more in order to enhance their skills in effectively implementing an integrative approach. Their will to implement this approach is consistent with

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how an integrative approach is situated in the research literature - as a clear instructional best practice. The research participants were willingly embarking on an integrative approach where there is a deliberate focus both on teaching relevant social studies concepts/content/skills *and the purposeful teaching of literacy skills*.

Through the implementation of an integrative approach, these teachers are setting the stage for moving away from merely “reading to learn” and towards also “learning to read” (Parker, 2001). These teachers realized that elementary age students are well equipped to engage in “content area literacy” as this instructional approach facilitates the strengthening of literacy and content area skills (Connor Et al., 2017). An integrative approach that focuses on delivering literacy instruction through social studies content minimizes the marginalization of social studies as a content area and promotes the strengthening of student literacy skills. By revitalizing elementary social studies instruction through an integrative approach, these teachers are working against the marginalization of social studies that is all too prevalent (Sell, 2017; Bennett & Hinde, 2015; Serriere, 2015). The research participants were well aware that there is a symbiotic relationship between social studies instruction and literacy (Chapin, 2006). The research literature points to an integrative approach as an effective means to enhance student literacy skills and content area knowledge in social studies. The research participants taught with a clear focus on what Connor describes as “content area literacy” and they realized that an integrative approach indeed facilitates the strengthening of literacy and content area skills (Connor Et al., 2017). These teachers understood that facilitating strong literacy skills indeed enables students to better understand social studies content and concepts (Haas and Laughlin, 1997; Seefeldt, 2005; Hickey, 1990; Parker, 2001; Chapin, 2006; Fearn and Fearn, 2013).

Teaching literacy through social studies “fits well”.

The research participants perceived that explicitly teaching literacy strategies at the elementary level through social studies content and concepts “fits well”. Teachers expressed the perception (grounded in true reality) that as elementary generalists, they are responsible for teaching literacy skills and social studies content. An integrative approach represents a natural, organic, and efficient way to deliver instruction in both of these areas. Teaching literacy skills through social studies was not viewed as “one more thing on the plate” so much as it was viewed as an efficient and effective strategy that teachers are eager to learn more about.

The classroom visitations indeed confirmed that teaching literacy skills through social studies content and concepts indeed fits well for the research participants and their students. It was clear to me that students were engaging in literacy skill development while hardly realizing that was what they were actually doing. The overall focus pointed toward “social studies” and “content”. Yet, the students were engaged in activities that would (likely) result in the strengthening of their reading and writing abilities.

Kim’s use of content about Native Americans was an effective and seamless way to engage the students in a study of nonfiction text features. Students used content related to Native American Tribes in order to identify main ideas, conference with each other, and generate questions that they used to read with a purpose. Amy’s graphic organizer activity strengthened student skills in collecting and organizing non-fiction information, which is an important literacy goal when dealing with nonfiction texts. It was clear that students were simultaneously learning content related information about the New England, Middle, and Southern Colonies at the same time. Defining key terms took on a meaningful and relevant social studies context as Amy’s students learned about the New Jersey State House. Angelina’s students and Karen’s students

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engaged in evidence based journal writing as a means to strengthen their understanding of individual historical perspective set in the age of exploration. Marilyn's students learned about New Jersey landforms as they strengthened their evidence based writing skills. Suzy and Jane's students researched, wrote, published, and displayed bound books about the states in the United States. This experience strengthened many aspects of their literacy skill base and used social studies content (information about the state that they researched) as the conduit through which they engaged in literacy skill based activities. The classroom visits that I conducted further strongly support that explicitly teaching literacy skills through social studies content and concepts "fits well".

For the research participants, the perception that teaching literacy through social studies fits well has worked in practice to counter the clear marginalization of elementary social studies that is described in the research literature (Tanner, 2008; Heafner and Fitchett, 2012; Holloway and Chiodo, 2009). Teachers are continually challenged in terms of resources, energy, time, etc. with an ever increasing flow of compliance mandates and responsibilities. It was clear (and encouraging) that the research participants did not view teaching literacy skills through social studies content and concepts as "just one more" of those add ons. They viewed this approach as a win-win scenario, a largely seamless and logically flowing approach.

Colin shared that, "...there are times when you do teach literacy skills explicitly...I think that unit lent itself to it...there other social studies units (where it fits well) whether it's Native Americans or Colonists of Jamestown or the Pilgrims..." Marilyn pointed out that the "good fit" quickly becomes apparent to students and is largely viewed as a "normal" classroom approach. She further shared that, "...it helps the students learn the concepts. I think they understand what they are reading better and they're applying it this way...I've been doing this way of reading (in)

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social studies... It's just become the norm..." Mary believed that this approach is a natural fit because students are provided with an authentic way to apply the literacy skills that they learn. She continued to share that, "I think it's a great reinforcement for the students to see that the skills that they use in reading are not in isolation but should be used anytime they read nonfiction text..." Amy's conception of a "good fit" for this approach is reflected by the reaction of her students. She explained that,

It totally immerses them in reading and writing and they get so excited about it. Even kids who don't even like writing end up enjoying writing because of the content that we're doing and the content is exciting to them...they love it...they're reading so much about it and I think (that is because) I brought in writing...the literacy and social studies go hand-in-hand.

Julia clearly expressed what she perceives as a win-win scenario with regard to teaching literacy through social studies content and concepts. She further shares that,

...it's like a win-win because you have to teach those skills and strategies so why not do it through your (social studies) content? Okay here's the thing, we have to teach content right? And we also have to teach reading strategies. To me it would make sense to do that through nonfiction informational text related to the content...For me I think it's a bonus to have them do literacy because now I'm connecting the reading, the writing and all of that (content)...I feel that it is very simple."

Kim explained that teaching literacy through social studies is not only effective but is time efficient as well. She stated that, "...it really saves on time... Any subject area that ties into something else it's not just like we're doing reading and that's it..." Karen similarly pointed out that this is a time efficient instructional strategy by stating that, "I also feel like you are using

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your time more wisely when you teach literacy through social studies because you get more for your buck so to speak because when you're teaching literacy you can be bringing in some of your Social Studies topics and still teaching how to read and write.” Karen continued to speak highly of this approach by sharing that, “...you can bring in these literacy topics...but you (also) end up teaching these concepts to deepen the students’ knowledge of them in both areas...when they are able to use the literary devices it deepens their knowledge of the social studies material...it fits well.” Angelina further commented on why she believes that this approach is a good fit as follows,

Using content area material to teach literacy is a great strategy in all subjects. I don't think that it takes away from social studies at all. I think that if you are using those skills, it's benefiting both subjects. If the students are engaged in a social studies textbook or explore a nonfiction book, they are learning social studies while still working on the reading and literacy piece, which I think is really the base of everything kids should be learning in school..I feel that all social studies activities need to have some literacy components.

While much of the existing research literature points to the marginalization of social studies at the elementary level, this “fits well” theme is consistent with the contrarian view that teaching literacy skills through social studies content and concepts bolsters elementary social studies in meaningful ways. Holloway and Chiodo (2009) noted that through integration with literacy, social studies in practice was prioritized in elementary schools to a much larger degree than what the generally accepted body of research would suggest.

My research suggests that this is the case in the Mayberry School District, at least for the teachers who participated in this study. An integrated approach to teaching literacy through

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social studies is indeed a powerful way to address the marginalization of social studies at the elementary level. Whether they realized it or not, through pursuing an instructional approach that specifically delivers literacy instruction through social studies content and concepts, the research participants in Mayberry are breathing new life into their elementary social studies program.

They were driven to do this not by a district or state mandate, but rather by their perception that the two instructional priorities fit well with each other. The research participants are further motivated to pursue this approach because they perceive it as a win-win in terms of time utilization. This is consistent with the conception of an integrated curriculum as the solution to the time related challenges that elementary teachers face (Hicks, 1996 and Holloway and Chiodo, 2009).

Teaching literacy through social studies helps students to develop a deeper and more meaningful understanding of social studies content and concepts.

The research participants perceived that teaching literacy through social studies helps students to develop a deeper and more meaningful understanding of social studies content and concepts. An explicit focus on literacy skill development is perceived by teachers as a way to enrich student understanding of social studies content and concepts. While this is not the primary focus of explicitly teaching literacy through social studies (the reverse is the actual intention), it contributes to the collective positive perception that these teachers held in regards to an integrative approach.

The research participants were pleased and encouraged by this additional benefit. Colin shared that, "...I thought by teaching a...literacy skill...it would help them comprehend the text which was social studies content better, that's what happened..." Marilyn also expressed that students gain a stronger understanding of social studies content and concepts through a literacy

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based approach by sharing that, “...it helps the students learn the (social studies) concepts...they understand what they are reading better...I've been doing this way of reading (in) social studies...Approaching social studies through a reading lens actually helps kids...” Mary similarly pointed out that, “Yes...I think it definitely helps (students learn the content)...” Amy expressed a similar view and stated that, “...it definitely helps them learn the social studies content...Then they learn so much about social studies...” Karen added that, “...it deepens their knowledge of the social studies material...it's helping them even in social studies.” Angelina explained that, “I don't think that it takes away from social studies at all. I think that if you are using those skills, it's benefiting both subjects...”

The research participants clearly believed that teaching literacy skills through content area instruction assists students in gaining a deeper and more meaningful understanding of social studies concepts and content. This belief is highly consistent with the research literature (National Writing Project and Nagin, 2003; Haas and Laughlin, 1997; Fearn and Fearn, 2013; Levstik & Barton, 2008i). These teachers believed that their students are well equipped for this, as the research literature suggests (Connor Et al., 2017). The perceptions of these teachers are consistent with the “contrarian view” (Holloway and Chiodo, 2009) in that elementary social studies in practice is prioritized by them to a larger degree than what the generally accepted body of research would suggest.

The research participants presented content and concepts to their students that conform to the prevalent elementary social studies narrative of chronological, positive progress over time.

During the classroom observations, the research participants engaged the students in a variety of social studies concepts and content. None of the topics were approached through a

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critical lens. The topics that were covered conform to the standard narrative of linear, positive progress that is so prevalent in elementary curricula and instructional practice alike (Loewen, 1995). Kim engaged students in content about how Native Americans lived. Students did not engage in any kind of critical analysis of relations between Native Americans and White settlers nor did they examine any (of the many) mistreatments that Native Americans were subject to at the hands of White settlers and the US Government. Amy's graphic organizer activity strengthened student skills in collecting and organizing non-fiction information, which is an important literacy goal when dealing with nonfiction texts. Students learned wrote content related information about the New England, Middle, and Southern Colonies but did so with no critical lens. The content during that lesson could have touched on the slave trade and how *all of the colonies benefited directly* from this abhorrent institution. More importantly, this lesson could have been used as a springboard for research as to why and how this took place. Defining key terms was the focus as Mary's students learned about the New Jersey State House. The students could have engaged with a critical literacy text that dealt with the challenge of balancing governmental power with personal liberties. There were several ways to address the content in this lesson through a critical lens but none were present. Angelina's students and Karen's students engaged in evidence based journal writing as a means to strengthen their understanding of individual historical perspective set in the age of exploration. Students could have engaged in texts that deal with the meaning of this historical period from the perspective of those who were systematically murdered, subjugated, enslaved, raped, etc. Yet this conversation did not occur during the lesson. Suzy and Jane's students researched, wrote, published, and displayed bound books about the states in the United States. While this experience strengthened many aspects of their literacy skill base and used social studies content (information about the state that they

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researched) as the conduit through which they engaged in literacy skill based activities - this activity still amounted to little more than the reporting of information and lacked any critical lens.

While my research questions did not focus on the presence of social studies content and concepts from a critical perspective, and analysis of the data revealed that the teachers in this study presented their students with a traditional narrative during the classroom visitations. From a content perspective, these teachers implemented an expanding communities approach (Chapin, 2006). Aspects of the “holiday curriculum” were clearly present through the classroom observations (Brophy and Alleman, 2009, p. 359). Paradoxically, the students who are taught by these teachers are likely quite able to engage with social studies content/issues from a critical perspective (Martin, 1990). These students are perfectly capable of exploring, “...different perspectives and generating multiple answers to problems.” (Gavin, Libresco, and Marron, 1999, p. 15.) These students did not have the opportunity to engage in social studies content and concepts through a critical lens during the lessons that I observed.

Chapter 5 - Implications / Conclusion

This project explored the perceptions that a certain group of teachers hold with regard to teaching literacy skills through social studies concepts and content. Their perceptions of engaging in an integrative approach to teaching literacy through social studies were overwhelmingly positive. Their articulation of the supports that they need in order to do so was clear and compelling. There indeed was great value in researching this issue because the existing body of professional research does not specifically address the research questions. Further, this proved to be a relevant topic to explore given the mandate that elementary teachers must focus on integrating nonfiction, informational texts into their literacy instruction. Social studies content is an effective medium through which to meet this requirement in elementary school. This study provides a phenomenological understanding of teacher perceptions (for these research participants) of needs and barriers that will enable researchers, school leaders, and others to provide teachers with the training and resources that are needed in order for them to do this, and to do it well.

The two main research questions were:

- (1) What do elementary teachers perceive as needs in teaching literacy through social studies?
- (2) What do elementary teachers perceive as barriers to teaching literacy through social studies?

The data spoke clearly to both of these questions. Through an analysis of the data and reflection, it became clear that there is a great deal of overlap in answering each of them. The teachers who participated in this study clearly expressed needs - that which is necessary in order to efficiently

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and effectively deliver literacy instruction through social studies concepts and content. My initial conception of teachers perceiving barriers has evolved over the course of the project.

The teachers in this study generally shared a very positive outlook on an integrative approach to teaching literacy skills through social studies. This can in part be attributed to the general feeling of positivity and openness that is prevalent in the district. It can also be attributed in part to the demographic homogeneity of the teacher participants and students alike in terms of race and social class. Simply put, these teachers and their students form a school community that is largely White and well to do.

During my classroom observations, the teachers engaged students in social studies content and concepts that conform to the generally accepted, Eurocentric narrative of linear, positive progress over time. The content and concepts that were used to deliver literacy skills lacked a critical lens. It may well be that the shared homogeneity of the staff and students contributed to a lack of content related critical perspective for this group of teachers.

The line between perceived needs and barriers became blurred beyond the point of being distinguishable. For these teachers, potential barriers were viewed simply as needs that were tangible, reasonable, and attainable. Never did I get the sense that there was either an unwillingness to implement an integrative approach or even that any “need” in the teacher’s mind escalated to the status of a “barrier”. The original research questions amount to an unintended dichotomy that was projected on this study prior to the collection of any data at all. These teachers did not perceive barriers. They clearly expressed that there were certain supports that would assist them in effectively engaging in an integrative approach to teaching literacy through social studies.

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The research participants expressed an inherent sense of value in an integrative approach to teaching literacy through social studies. This provides a glimmer of hope for elementary social studies as a field. Yet at the same time this reality raises the question of “What social studies content is being taught?” As field specialists we may need to be careful what we wish for. “More” social studies should rightly be viewed as a double edged sword. If the social studies content and concepts that are used to teach literacy skills are balanced, accurate, and inclusive of multiple perspectives through a critical lens, then this is indeed a win for social studies as a field. If however, the content and concepts promote a traditional agenda that lacks balance, is rife with inaccuracies, and is presented through a lens that promotes the dominant culture and traditional historical narrative, then great damage will continue to be done to our students. More is not necessarily better. *More of the right kinds of social studies content and concepts* as a means to teach literacy through social studies have great instructional value.

These teachers realized well prior to this research study that social studies as a content area is indeed a rich source of non-fiction, informational text. They cited English Language Arts learning benefits as a motivation to implement an integrative approach. This may be an indicator that the perceived importance of social studies at the elementary level is increasing incrementally, despite what other research studies suggest (Tanner, 2008 and Heafner and Fitchett, 2012). For these teachers and through an integrative approach, elementary social studies may be receiving more implementation, attention, and perceived relevance.

Gaining a better understanding of teacher perceptions that deal with how to effectively deliver literacy instruction through social studies content and concepts can assist researchers, school leaders, and professional development providers in designing professional learning opportunities with these teacher perceptions in mind. What follows are the “big picture”

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implications that should be considered in providing teachers with the necessary supports to teach literacy skills through social studies concepts and content.

When it Comes to Literacy Versus Social Studies Content, Think Win-Win

A paradigm shift must take place with regard to the “us and them” mentality of social studies as a content area and teaching literacy at the elementary level. This won’t likely happen organically on a large scale given the substantial body of research material that laments elementary social studies as the proverbial unwanted stepchild that resides deep within the bowels of elementary curricula. An integrated approach to teaching literacy through social studies is the key element. Teachers need to be exposed to and effectively trained in an integrative approach. Teachers also need to be trained in presenting their students with balanced social studies content and concepts that promote a critical lens. When quality social studies content is taught through targeted literacy lessons, students benefit in their content area retention and their literacy skills as well. Teachers need to know this and to learn how to effectively deliver an integrated approach.

For as long as elementary level social studies is viewed as residing “here” while literacy instruction is viewed as existing “over there” students and teachers will be missing out on two valuable opportunities. The first is providing social studies with a much needed boost in attention and relevance. This is contingent on the requirement that the social studies content and concepts are balanced and include a critical perspective. During the classroom observations that I conducted, the students were unlikely to learn about the struggles that their co-citizens (past and present) face. They were unlikely to learn about historical/social studies issues from a critical lens outside of the school setting, so it is imperative that it takes place there. The second is providing for more time on task in ELA (always an elusive goal to achieve) and more

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specifically, an increased number of opportunities for students to engage meaningfully with nonfiction, informational texts. It is not a contest between literacy and social studies. Both can be winners at the elementary level through an integrative approach. Teachers need to know this and students need to engage in literacy and social studies instruction through an integrative approach.

The Teachers are Saying, “Show Me.” So Let’s Show Them.

There was a clearly articulated, common thread throughout each and every teacher interview that was conducted in this study, and in the earlier pilot study for that matter. It was never suggested in any kind of a leading way, yet it appears in every interview transcript. Teachers clearly indicated that in order for them to learn how to effectively teach literacy skills through social studies content, they wished to observe a skilled practitioner doing so. There were many other supports shared by the teachers, but this one was most often mentioned first and with the largest degree of palpable passion and enthusiasm. This should not be a heavy lift for leaders, scholars, teacher trainers and the like. Teacher “superstars” who are specialized experts in an integrative approach to teaching literacy through social studies must be identified and rank and file teachers need to see them doing what they do best. The teachers who were research participants made it clear that talk, written articles, and other resources are great, but *actually learning by observing a skilled practitioner* is what they perceive as the most valuable asset in building their own skill set and sense of confidence. If this is what they perceive as a critical need, they should surely be provided with this opportunity.

Leaders Must Invest In Materials and Resources.

From at least one perspective, more is expected of elementary teachers than any other group of teachers. No group of educators is responsible for teaching a greater number of subjects. They are usually content generalist who lack a deep content specific knowledge of

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social studies content and skills in comparison to secondary teachers who possess one or more content area specializations. The teachers in this study were perfectly willing (and eager) to pursue an integrative approach to teaching literacy through social studies. Due to a minimal content specific body of knowledge and a dearth of time available, providing these teachers with rich, content related material would assist them tremendously in effectively implementing an integrative approach to teaching literacy through social studies. Committees that include content specialists as leaders should be at the forefront of selecting balanced content resources that provide students with a critical lens through which to view social studies content and concepts. Beyond this, these teachers need leveled texts and rich nonfiction libraries that contain books and other resources that cover topics that correspond to their grade level social studies curricula. Access to physical and/or electronic repositories of such resources would substantially assist teachers in effectively engaging in an integrative approach to teaching literacy through social studies.

Social Studies as a Skill Based Endeavor - Shift The Focus Away From Content.

Essential content and skills are the cornerstone of social studies curricula and delivering an integrated approach to literacy at the elementary level. Students must engage with social studies content and concepts that are balanced, accurate, and that provide them with a critical perspective. At the same time, skill acquisition should be the larger goal and content should not be the primary focus. Teachers, Leaders, and academics must begin to shift the social studies orientation paradigm away from content and toward skills. Teaching literacy through social studies via an integrative approach should not be viewed as something miraculous- either from the perspective of a social studies or ELA content specialist point of view. In social studies, It is clearly no longer about the facts. Even those with a minimal education can easily access facts

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and historical information. We need to begin to do a better job of selling social studies at the elementary level as means through which to teach important, lifelong skills - such as literacy. The more that this conception can be spread and normalized, the more prevalent an integrative approach will become. In tandem with this, teachers will become more skilled at delivering literacy instruction through social studies content. Students will benefit greatly from such a paradigm shift.

Threats to Validity.

There were threats to validity in this study. The findings of the study are limited in their generalizability. This is true because of the qualitative orientation of the study and the small sample size. Further, my positionality as a supervisor (although not directly over the research participants) may have acted as a threat to validity as well. Still, the study accomplished what it was designed to do and it built substantially on the original pilot study. The conclusions of this study can and should be used to better understand teacher perceptions of teaching literacy through social studies. Any researcher, policy maker, school leader, or professional development provider interested in this phenomenon will likely find these conclusions to be useful.

Policy Implications

While this study identified themes and practices for this group of teachers that reflect a positive outlook on the future of elementary social studies, from a policy perspective there is still cause for real concern. Elementary social studies is indeed a low priority at the national, state, and school district levels. This is the case in large part because of the emphasis that has been placed on literacy and mathematics instruction at the elementary level. Policy makers emphasize measurable achievement on standardized assessments in literacy and mathematics. Elementary social studies has been largely left by the wayside. It should be noted that within the literacy

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component there is an emphasis on nonfiction, informational text that fits social studies quite nicely. However, this “nice fit” is not marketed as such nor is it adequately understood by policy makers. A paradigm shift needs to occur generally and this must take place at the policy level. An integrative approach to social studies at the elementary level must be promoted by national and state education agencies as an effective and necessary instructional strategy. Policy makers should consult with professional organizations such as the National Council for the Social Studies and those who lead teacher education programs in developing policies that promote elementary social studies. National and state education agencies should provide financial support for programs that train teachers to implement an integrative approach in the classroom. These programs must be offered for teachers in the field and for those enrolled in pre-service teacher education programs. The focus of these programs should be to empower teachers to deliver an effective integrative approach to teaching literacy through social studies in elementary classrooms.

These policy recommendations must be tempered to a degree considering the nature of this phenomenological study. The findings in this qualitative study are limited in their generalizability due to the nature of the study and the small sample size of the research participants and the data that were collected from them. Therefore these policy recommendations that pertain specifically to promoting an integrative approach to teaching literacy through social studies may be more applicable to the local board of education that governs the schools where the research participants are employed. The policy recommendations that pertain to promoting elementary social studies in general are more broadly relevant and applicable. This is due to the fact the perceptions and experiences of the teachers in this study closely mirror those that are found consistently in the research literature.

Implications for Teacher Education.

Individuals in positions of leadership in teacher education programs should ensure that an integrative approach to teaching literacy skills through social studies concepts and content is an integral part of a preservice teacher's learning. The research literature suggests that implementation of an integrative approach is infrequent, so pre-service and new teachers are unlikely to gain an understanding of this approach through student teaching and/or new teacher mentoring. The research literature likewise suggests that most teacher education programs do not adequately equip teachers to engage in an integrative approach to teaching literacy through elementary social studies. Because of these realities, the responsibility for initially training teachers on an integrative approach falls squarely on those who deliver new teacher education programs. An integrative approach in explicitly teaching social studies at the elementary level *must be embraced* by pre-service teacher programs. Engaging them in how to integrate critical literacy instructional experiences is likewise extremely important. An integrative approach must be explicitly taught as a necessary and effective instructional strategy. It should include observation of skilled practitioners as a cornerstone. It must be "sold" as such to new teachers, citing the many research based benefits, so that although new teachers enter the field with no experience, they will do so with a strong knowledge as to how to deliver this instruction and why it benefits students so greatly.

Directions for Future Research

The results of this study suggest that further research on teaching literacy through social studies would benefit any individuals and/or organizations tasked with providing teacher training and support so that teachers can effectively implement an integrative approach. Such research could include related questions that target specific content and teaching a particular literacy skill.

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For example, teachers can be interviewed regarding their perceived needs and barriers to teaching inferencing (a specific literacy skill) through nonfiction, informational texts that pertain to the three branches of government in the United States (a specific content related topic). Future research could focus on such questions that are narrower than the two research questions that were examined in this dissertation study. In doing so, that research may provide more specific insight as to teacher perceptions that pertain to very targeted aspects of teaching literacy through social studies. Having a high degree of clarity in understanding very specific teacher perceptions *related to the larger theme* (explicitly teaching literacy skills through social studies concepts and content) will enable those who support elementary social studies teachers to provide those teachers with the material and professional development opportunity supports that they need. Future research can further define needs and barriers relative to very specific aspects of teaching literacy through social studies.

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Appendix A**Interview Guide**

Interviewer: Good morning. Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. I am interested in learning about elementary teachers' perceptions about teaching literacy through social studies.

We are going to discuss 11 questions that will take about 50 minutes to ask and answer. If at any time you wish to stop answering questions or if there are particular questions that you would prefer not to answer, please let me know. You can choose to refrain from answering any question. You can also choose to end the interview at any time. Do you have any questions?

1. Please tell me about the last time you taught literacy in a social studies lesson. Walk me through the events of the lesson. What did you do? What did the students do?
2. How often do you engage in these activities?
3. Some social studies teachers believe that teaching literacy skills fits well with social studies while others believe that it gets in the way. How do you feel about this?
4. Some social studies teachers believe that teaching literacy through social studies actually helps students learn social studies concepts and content, but others think that it detracts from learning. How do you feel about it?

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5. There is a huge push now to teach literacy skills through the use of nonfiction, informational texts. Some social studies teachers believe that this approach actually helps students learn, but others think that it detracts from learning. How do you feel about it?
6. Tell me about any training provided by your school/district, workshops, university courses, etc. that provides teachers with support in teaching literacy through social studies.
7. What kinds of training would help you to teach literacy through social studies?
8. What types of materials would help you to teach literacy through social studies?
9. What might make it difficult or complex to teach literacy through social studies?
10. What other supports might you need to be able to do this effectively?
11. Are there any other thoughts that you would like to share on teaching literacy through social studies?

That concludes our interview. Thank you so very much. I really appreciate your participation.

Appendix B

Observed Teacher Practices

I received invitations to observe several teachers as they delivered instruction. I expressed to the teachers that I would be interested in observing a lesson that focused on teaching some aspect of literacy instruction through social studies content. No further parameters were offered. These observations were pre-scheduled, the teachers knew when I would be visiting a particular class. All of their teaching practices indeed dealt with some aspect of literacy instruction delivered through social studies content. An analysis of field notes reflects a clear dichotomy in teacher practice. Certain activities/lessons clearly reflected targeted, high quality literacy instruction that made use of social studies content to deliver that instruction. These lessons very much resembled full out ELA lessons in their structure and complexity. Other teachers practices were less complex than the perceptions (dealing with teaching literacy through social studies) that the research subjects (as a whole) expressed during the teacher interviews. This may indicate that motivation to engage in more complex activities that focus on teaching literacy through social studies is emerging if not present, but that the current level of teacher training and access to necessary resources don't yet support more complex/sophisticated approaches for at least some of the research subjects. Observed practices shed light on where teachers are in their journey towards skillfully implementing an integrative approach in comparison to where they would like (eventually) to be.

Kim

Kim's lesson was designed to explicitly teach a literacy skill (finding the main idea) through social studies content. In form and structure it was the equivalent to a well planned ELA skills lesson. At the outset of the lesson, Kim stated to the students that, "We are now focusing on reading to learn, not learning to read. Students were given two handouts, an article on Native Americans and a worksheet. Kim facilitated a brief classroom discussion on text features. The students gave examples such as glossary, captions, table of contents, etc. Kim stated, "Those text features help up as researchers. Knowing those text features will help us to learn more about Native Americans. The importance of text features was discussed, which led to a brief discussion about finding the main idea and supporting details. An analogy was drawn by the teacher between this and a table and its legs. Kim stated, "We are going to try to find a main idea for each of the paragraphs. How does finding the main idea for each paragraph, how does that help us to understand the article better?" Kim's lesson design sought to explicitly teach a literacy skill (finding the main idea) through social studies content, which came in the form of an article and worksheet that dealt with Native Americans. Students first read the paragraph silently. Students then discussed/debated what they thought that the main idea was as Kim circulated around the room, guiding their discussions as needed. Kim later placed the article in the document camera so that the entire class could view it in a magnified form. Students were asked to write down any questions that they had about Native Americans based on their reading of the first paragraph. They did so. Examples of student questions included, "Did every Native American live in a teepee? Where did they get names for their tribes? Were there Native Americans in this area?"

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How many tribes were there?” Students then used their self generated questions to guide their reading of the rest of the article. Key words were identified by the students and teacher alike in order to determine the main idea of the first paragraph. The teacher stated to the students that as we read, we often develop more questions. The students were invited to share their main ideas with the larger class, which they did. Next, the teacher asked the students to read the second paragraph and to independently to generate questions, identify important vocabulary, and generate a main idea for that paragraph. Students shared their main ideas and provided textual evidence to support those claims.

Amy

Amy designed her lesson to provide her students with practice in note taking. She used a learning center format and text based learning cards to use social studies content as a means to strengthen student note taking skills. At the outset of Amy’s lesson, students were seated at the front of the room, looking at the active board. She informed students that they are going to practice note taking, which is an important skill. She stated to the students that, “We will be looking at all three regions of colonies. Today we are going to read about why certain colonies went together, what do each of the regional colonies have in common?” Amy asked the students, “Why did people go there? What attracted people to come to each of the regional colonies?” Amy projected a picture of a lemonade stand on the activboard. She stated that her own children never had a lemonade stand, but it is a great thing to have. She further explained that a busy street would be a good place for a lemonade stand because lots of people pass such a location. She proceeded to ask the class, “Would a quiet place with not much traffic be a good place to have a lemonade

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stand?” Several students responded that it would not be a good place because, “You will not have a lot of customers.” Amy informed the students that they would be learning about colonial jobs. She stated, “I am wondering if people had different jobs depending on where they lived? Would you be a farmer in all of the colonies, would it make sense? Would you harvest lumber or build ships in all of the colonies? Keep the lemonade stand thought in mind today to see if this makes sense.” She further stated to the students that, “Today you are reading about jobs, people, and the geography and climate of the land.” The students were able to venture to three learning stations. The students were given three sheets, one for each region. A graphic organizer was displayed on the activboard. The graphic organizer corresponded to one of each of the reading passages (located at each of the three learning stations). Students each completed three graphic organizers, one for each of the three regions (New England, Middle, and Southern). Amy modeled how to fill out the graphic organizer based on the information that was read by the student at each station. Amy stated to the students, “This is just note taking, I want to just bullet - to take away some important information in non paragraph form.” For each of the regional colonies, the students worked with a partner at three stations. At each station, students read three cards for a colonial region. The cards were geography and climate, people, and jobs. Students were given 10 minutes at each station, for a total of a 30 minute activity, 10 minutes at each of the region based stations. Amy stated, “I want you to be thinking about what are the similarities and differences of each of the regions. The goal is to be able to take good notes that we could use to teach someone else what we learned.” Amy’s students engaged in the activity, discussing what they felt was important enough to include on the graphic organizer. They recorded the same information.

Mary

The focus of this lesson was a literacy based instructional goal to be targeted through the use of social studies content. The literacy skill was identifying keywords in text. Mary began her lesson with a turn and talk. She stated to students, “Tell a partner the three branches of government and make a statement about one of the three.” The students talked with each other about this and then shared their ideas out loud with the class. Mary then delivered a powerpoint based mini lesson on looking for keywords in text. She stated to the students, “Today I want to practice finding keywords, what will give me my answer, and how do I use this strategy? We look for important words to figure out what we need all the time in Language Arts but we can also do this in social studies. Your first goal is to read the article first.” She proceeded to read an article with the class as a form of whole class guided practice. The text was an excerpt from the history of the NJ State House. A student was asked to read this aloud, which he did. Mary stated, “My next thing is I want to read the questions so I know what I am looking for.” She read the statehouse questions to the students. Examples of questions included:

1. Where is it located?
2. What jobs do assemblymen, senators, and the governor do in the statehouse?

Mary asked, When we look at #1, what are some key words in the question that will help me answer it in the paragraph? The students came up with word “located”. Mary underlined that word. Mary continued and stated, “Skim the article, use your finger and point to where you see the word ‘located’.” Students proceeded to point. Mary further explained, “Train your eyes to look for the word located. We can’t just look at the word, we need to read the sentence it’s in.”

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The students were asked to read the sentence that contained the key word. Mary continued, “So reading the complete sentence, where is the state house located?” The students correctly identified Trenton and the teacher wrote Trenton on the board. Mary guided them through another example in similar fashion, this time dealing with “jobs”. An interesting permutation of this example is that the students did not explicitly locate ‘jobs’ as a clearly stated keyword, but still came to the conclusion that this was a key concept in the article and hence explicitly stated keywords do not always appear in tandem with each of an article’s key concepts. The students then engaged in what the teacher labeled a web quest. It amounted to students accessing electronic article resources where they would apply the skill of identifying key terms and concepts. The teacher provided students with Chromebooks to engage in the web quest through her Google classroom. The “Webquest” was a link to an online fact sheet published by the state of NJ. The students worked on this activity (mostly independently) for about 20 minutes. The students were asked to complete a Google form that would record one (content based) “fun fact” that they learned as a result of today’s activity. The students were asked to turn and talk about what they learned about state level government. They did so and also shared some of their responses with the larger class.

Angelina

Angelina’s students were engaged in a ship travel simulation that placed the students in the role of 16th and 17th century European explorers. There were many facets to this learning experience. One aspect of the student activity that dealt with teaching literacy skills through

social studies content was a written journal that students created as they progressed through the activity. This was an exercise in evidence based writing. Students were required to make use of

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specific evidence that was derived from their status in the game/simulation at a given point/day. Students created diary/log entries based upon their current circumstance, which amounted to the use of evidence to create their own (historical fiction) journal entry based on that evidence. Angelina displayed the following on the activeboard, “You have spent another week at sea and must now make another supply check and navigation check. The captain reports that this ship is making about 70 to 80 miles a day. However, you are sure that you are traveling at least 90, if not 100 miles per day. Why would the captain lie to you?” Further, students were presented with another portion of text for the setting. The textual evidence to be used to create their journal entries came from events of chance per the game (Example: Your boat has been leaking for one day.) and “setting” texts shared by the teacher (Tonight is a particular dark night as heavy clouds screen then moon from sight.) This simulation incorporated the literacy skills of writing, reading, and determining the meaning of new vocabulary words. The writing activity was the main form of explicit engagement in literacy instruction. Students were provided with the following framework:

How are the supplies?

How is your navigation?

Did anyone get sick?

What was it like being in a bad storm?

Did your ship get damaged in the storm?

What is the morale of your crew? Has it gotten worse or better, why?

What are crew members doing in their free time?

What are you feeling and experiencing during this exploration?

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The students discussed some of these questions for a couple of minutes before beginning to create journal entries independently. The students were given about 20 minutes to complete their journal entries. An example of student work was shared with the larger class as follows: “I am getting scared about my safety because the captain and navigator are getting more and more angry. I hope that they will be in a better mood in the following weeks.”

Karen

During Karen’s classroom visit, I had the pleasure of observing the same game/simulation activity that was observed in Angelina’s classroom. Karen’s students were engaged in a ship travel simulation that placed the students in the role of 16th and 17th century European explorers. There were many facets to this learning experience. One aspect of the student activity that dealt with teaching literacy skills through social studies content was a written journal that students created as they progressed through the activity. This was an exercise in evidence based writing. Students were required to make use of specific evidence that was derived from their status in the game/simulation at a given point/day. Students created diary/log entries based upon their current circumstance, which amounted to the use of evidence to create their own journal entries based on that evidence. This simulation incorporated the literacy skills of writing, reading, and determining the meaning of new vocabulary words. The writing activity was the main form of explicit engagement in literacy instruction. During the observed lesson, the students took some class time to examine progress on their reading logs. Several students shared their logs by reading aloud in front of class. Karen displayed on the activeboard, “Our first stop

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today is the Canary Islands, Spain. Remember that Portugal sponsored the Azores. You have some options now as follows:

1. *Go onshore or not*
2. *Wait or get towed*
3. *How to deal with a sea of darkness”*

With regard to the journal entries, Karen reinforced that, “It's important that you give facts about what the voyage is like. I am asking these people to read these because they are citing great information that tells what the experience is like.” Karen further stated that, “Today is going to be a lot of chance. We are like TV show of survivor on our voyage. When each team comes up to do their games of chance, we listen and pay attention. We have another week of sailing so we will be taking changes and writing our ship’s log.” During the last 10 minutes of the lesson, Karen displayed a copy of the rubric that is used to grade the journals on the activeboard. The students then sat quietly and wrote in their journals for 10 minutes.

Marilyn

Marilyn approached teaching literacy skills through social studies content in a student centered, experiential fashion. The focus of lesson was how to strategically engage with non-fiction, informational texts. Through the experiences in the lesson, the students came to see that in order to write authoritatively about a social studies topic, the writer must have the background knowledge on the topic and/or be able to research the same in order to accurately back claims with evidence. Further, strategies for making meaning/comprehending what is contained within textual resources to be used as sources of evidence were explored as well. Marilyn began her lesson by informing the students that they would focus on learning about the landforms of NJ today. She stated, “Whisper to partner what a landform might be.” The students shared answers

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with each other for about a minute. Marilyn stated, “I can see wheels moving. We have ideas. We know some things about landforms. We are going to watch a video about the different types of landforms to refresh our memories.” The students were asked to take out their notebooks and write a listing of landforms (headings) across two pages. Marilyn then showed the students a 7 minute video on landforms. Prior to doing so she stated, “Take notes, I am not expecting you to write down everything, just what peaks your interest or reminds you of New Jersey.” The students took notes during the video. At the conclusion of the video, Marilyn stated, “Turn and talk to a partner, use your notes, what did you learn about landforms?” A brief discussion ensued. Marilyn further stated, “I want you to pretend. Think that there is a pen pal, a person in another country. You have to describe our state to them, using what we think we know, how would you describe NJ? Take the strip from the middle of the table, glue in that strip to your notebook. Create a list, web, draw pictures to show your thinking. The students drew on their prior knowledge to participate in this portion of the activity. It was clear as an observer that the prior knowledge was somewhat limited. Marilyn proceeded to ask the class, “Are you noticing something? Do we know a lot about (the geography) of NJ? We know some, but don’t you want to know more? In the center of the table you will see a packet. Everyone grab a packet. Before we read nonfiction, what do we do? Yes, we look at text features. From pages 8-13 (packet) look at all text features used. What are they telling us about what we are going to read?” The packet was titled “Landscape of NJ”. The students identified several text features in the packet, such as captions, pictures, bolded words, a map, summaries, statistics, etc. Marilyn further engaged the students by asking, “After we look at text features, what should we do next? We look at the text features to figure out our purpose for reading. We can generate two questions to help us to guide our reading. I want to refresh our memory on how to set questions before I read.” Marilyn

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modeled how to generate questions in the context of the packet on the document camera. She further stated, “We want to be deeper thinkers, stay away from ‘what is’ questions. Now I want you to push yourself. Think about a question that you can answer, but stay away from the simple questions, like ‘What do the bolded words mean?’” Students worked with partners and generated two questions. Students were charged with the task of reading the text and answering the self-generated questions. When students found the answers to their own questions, they placed a post it on the part of the text where the answer appeared. The reading activity was completed through the use of small group formation with four groups in total. Marilyn read aloud to her group, the second group read round robin, one pair read silently each, and one pair read chorally.

During the last five minutes of the lesson, students created a cloud of facts about NJ landforms. Examples of facts listed included: “It’s a small state that has a lot of people.”, “Great Swamp is a wetland.” and “Some areas are much flatter than others.” Marilyn skillfully circled back to the penal activity by asking, “Are we a little more clear on what we will tell your pen pal when we write our letters?”

Suzy and Jane

Suzy and Jane participated in a school wide activity across the 4th grade. Students self selected a county in NJ of their choice. Every student then self selected another student to collaborate with. The collaboration partners were based on the same county selection (Example - one student who chose Ocean County would self select a partner/collaborator who also chose Ocean County at the outset of the project.) Students were not limited by class, they could choose partners across fourth grade. The students were charged with the following tasks:

1. Research their chosen county using hard copy and online resources
2. Publish structured books about their county with specifically numbered chapters

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3. Participate in a symposium of displaying the books. The work of every 4th grade student in the school was displayed for review during the symposium.
4. Each collaborative pair created and displayed maps of their chosen county.
5. Each collaborative pair created a written explanation of their map.
6. Students baked cakes and cut out the shape of their selected county. They decorated the cake and ate a “piece of their county” as a celebratory portion of the symposium.

While this activity was cross curricular in nature, it was designed to clearly and intentionally incorporate numerous aspects of literacy through the use of social studies content. The research that students conducted required them to apply and refine their reading comprehension skills in order to make meaning of the researched material. Without being able to do so, they never would have been able to engage in the written explanations of the maps that they created or in the creation of their county themed books. Writing the explanations of the maps and as well authoring the books clearly represent a strong and intentional lesson design that reflects an integrative approach with an emphasis on reading comprehension (through research) and writing.

Appendix C**Excerpts From Teacher Interviews Organized By Theme****The Need for More/Better Teaching Resources and Materials**

Colin:...you need the materials to do it. You need something that that will work for whatever lessons and whatever skills you're trying to teach.....I don't approach social studies in the strong literacy-based (orientation) because I don't really have a lot of materials to do that...

Marilyn: I know there's more out there but how do I incorporate that? There are more texts...better videos...better nonfiction resources that I could be using besides my photocopied pieces that I've had since I started teaching.

Mary: I think having support in resources would be really helpful because as a teacher who teaches reading I feel I have a good sense of what skills the students need for informational texts.

Amy: I think having support in resources would be really helpful because as a teacher who teaches reading I feel I have a good sense of what skills the students need for informational texts...I think definitely just trade books and maybe some primary resources...We were having a hard time coming up with the quote from the person from colonial America so maybe some of those primary resources might be helpful. That's probably what we would need...We did have a hard time coming up with our books for this colonial project. I know that I've ordered a lot over the years and spent a lot of my own money ordering these books. Yeah, I know I've written grants to get books as well...I would say most of the kids used the books that were out there out in the hallway so most of them that we've gotten over the years but we are sharing them with

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them with 4 different classes so we kind of had to tweak our schedules a little bit so that we could share those texts.

Julia: *Not having the proper materials (is challenging), sometimes depending on the topic or their content... I personally think the social studies texts are outdated and they're written on a high level for some students...It's hard for them to read independently so when I use the social studies textbook I'm pretty much reading to them and hoping that they're following along as many of them cannot be that independent (in their reading).*

Kim: *(We need more resources)...how it ties into our standards and the exact material...we could try it out. One stop shopping, It's all about actually questioning and seeing if we can find an easier way to do things...(we need) the materials to support us. I think teachers are pretty good at carrying out lessons when they have the materials that they need to do it...sometimes it's an extremely hard time finding materials to make it happen.*

Angelina: *I guess if we had a little bit more resources...then I think it would change and the activities the students are engaged in would be more worthwhile and would support the learning process a lot better..We did get a set...a small set of books that are great to be able to utilize within our classrooms but it's not enough. There is not even a class set...We often make photocopies of the whole book which is a lot of paper to be using. Having more resources and then that time to kind of pick out what are the meaningful parts...you should be reading and then what are the application activities you can do is time well spent.. I know I meet with my grade*

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level partner and we will map some planning out together which is really nice, but just having more resources...would be great...

Beth: *...having the materials that we need to implement something like this would be fantastic...We definitely are lacking in nonfiction material for students...we are lacking in lower-level nonfiction social studies related books. So I would like to see more low-level high interest Social Studies books on the topics that the students would be interested in learning more about. I do believe we do have historical fiction covered with lower levels but more nonfiction would benefit the students.*

The Need for Leveled, Content Area Text Resources

Colin: *Specifically with our reading program...based on the Fountas and Pinnell guided reading levels...we don't have (leveled reading materials)...not just for social studies, it's even for our informational text we don't have leveled texts...we don't have it like we have one article here or one book here but...to become experts in certain topics... we would need level texts on the same topics, several books on that theme we're talking about with a lot of material you would like to do with the kids...*

Marilyn: *I'm making it work with what I have but I know everything could always be better. So the tough part is when you are doing reader's workshop and when you're teaching these skills, the reading, you want students reading on level....social studies that is one size fits all... I know that's not the direction we're headed at the district and that's not the direction I want to be as the classroom teacher. It's really hard...I understand why we have to teach (NJ history) and I'm not*

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saying change the course. I don't have an answer for what I think can make it better because we've searched and there's nothing out there (leveled, NJ history texts that are leveled) to make it better... I do have students that aren't classified but received achieve (basic skills instruction) that struggle with reading the text and I can't find anything for them that's similar to what we are using that kind of like brought down (the reading level). I am against trying to do whole class reading. So there were years when I had a co-teacher, she could take a small group of two or three students and pretty much worked with them so that I can work with other students... (struggling students could) listen to it on tape but they're really not as engaged as they would be if they were doing it (reading) on their own. (It's) really hard when you have that...you just see them struggling, they don't understand it, and you can't provide them with something (leveled reading) to help them understand it...and also about the lack of (reading) levels when trying to find information.

Mary: *I think having a large range of (student reading) levels in a social studies class makes it difficult to find text that is accessible to all students, especially when the social studies textbook seems to be written above many of their levels.*

Julia: *I personally think the social studies texts are outdated and they're written on a high level for some students...It's hard for them to read independently so when I use the social studies textbook I'm pretty much reading to them and hoping that they're following along as many of them cannot be that independent. It's at these times when I need differentiated levels of reading...like (leveled) books or novel work that's related to that subject area, that would be wonderful.*

Karen: *They can grasp more because you are going to use so much of those large vocabulary in what they're reading. I feel like that makes it more difficult when they have to define the words... Some of the reading materials are a little bit complex for third graders and that can be an issue...Leveled books are really important and I wish that I could have them on several topics...So you just have to make sure that you are finding material that they (students) can read and understand.*

Angelina: *I feel like I can support the lowest readers and small-group work - I know I have good stuff for my lower level students. I would like to have good stuff (materials) for my middle-of-the-road, average, my lower groups but it's making sure to have something for everyone to be working on and having the right materials. The students that understand the social science concepts are strong readers and could really be doing something enriching. I don't always know where to go to get something that isn't just...I don't want to make it seem like a punishment because they're stronger in those skills...I feel like I can support the lowest readers and small-group work - I know I have good stuff for my lower level students. I would like to have good stuff (materials) for my middle-of-the-road, average, my lower groups but it's making sure to have something for everyone to be working on and having the right materials. The students that understand the social science concepts are strong readers and could really be doing something enriching. I don't always know where to go to get something that isn't just...I don't want to make it seem like a punishment because they're stronger in those skills... I know it's good to pull small groups and have leveled reading. I don't have the resources to do leveled reading with my class.*

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Beth: *I know it's good to pull small groups and have leveled reading. I don't have the resources to do leveled reading with my class...So I would like to see more low-level high interest Social Studies books on the topics that the students would be interested in learning more about. I do believe we do have historical fiction covered with lower levels but more nonfiction would benefit the students...we are lacking in lower-level nonfiction social studies related books.*

The Need for “One Stop Shopping” - A Comprehensive Teacher Resource Set to Promote Teaching Literacy Through Social Studies

Amy: *...some kind of central repository, that would help out, or articles that would help out or web sites that are safe for the kids...maybe some kind of compilation of all of that broken down by topic would be really helpful.*

Julia: *So I would like somebody to give me all that...It does not matter who does it but the first person to judge it and say why are we doing it this way... I want it done but I want it done the right way right by someone who is very knowledgeable in that field...I need a ring binder that provides me with these resources...the materials the objectives the skills and strategies. I would love that laid out for me. Right now it is very difficult. Okay you need someone to write out the entire unit, outlining for me or what literacy strategies I could be using within each unit, what materials I could be utilizing, what standards I would be hitting.*

Kim: *...and then a true resource of what is expected from us, how it ties into our standards and the exact material that we could do to try it out. One stop shopping, It's all about actually questioning and seeing if we can find an easier way to do things...it would take those good*

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resources where we can see it lined up. You know when someone tells you how to do it and gives it to you it's very easy to do that...We can't spend our time searching for it so that one binder with it altogether that lines up with the reading and Social Studies...Teachers need to have hard copies so if there was a binder that said here's your reading lesson, text features, here's the Native American unit to help you teach it and bring it together in one place...I think materials that are (part of an) up-to-date a curriculum that is in order for us and bringing it together in one place and has great technology...

Karen: *I think that possibly being exposed to different examples of lessons or types of student work or projects...*

The Need for More/Better Teacher Training

Colin: *I would need someone to tell (me), to give me tips on how to start. I guess that's where I don't know where to start. Things here and there, but I don't think it's one lesson. Here in the midst of other things, you know it doesn't really qualify...I know it's been said but there has not ever been a clear cut, "This is going to be it, we're going to give you strategies to integrate your social studies curriculum." ...No, not really. I took a class 9 years ago that...might have been about that but I barely remember it...*

Marilyn: *I haven't had any formal training through the district or the school or workshops or university...Then maybe if we start grassroots and if we can't find anything or people then we can maybe go (for) outside (training) because I feel like we learn better from each other. So I think that might be a way to start...Lucy the person next door is doing a wonderful job (so take)*

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time to visit and talk...time to get together...(it might be) hard to schedule and people also don't feel that what they're doing is really (great)...so time to just get together and throw everything in a pot, see this

Mary: *I think it's important to see it done well but I also think it benefits teachers to learn many different ways of how to incorporate literacy in social studies. I was thinking more of a presentation on if you're teaching this you could do this if you want to focus on this skill here are some activities you can do so that it builds more of a plethora of lessons... I think having experts come and show you what things you can do that you probably don't even know you can do would just give us a different perspective on how to incorporate literacy...Because professional development is not as common in social studies and we haven't had much in my 10 years of teaching...I have not had training.*

Amy: *I think some supports that might be needed to teach literacy through social studies effectively would be more professional development in this area.*

Julia: *So what kind of training? I guess the training would tell us how exactly to do that (teaching literacy through social studies)...so let's say we have a Social Studies textbook okay so we have a teacher's Edition...that kind of helps us to navigate through the text but I guess training would help (me) to see how I can really utilize a text like the textbook to the maximum...I would think that some type of training...what is expected of the students and then taking a look at what is the content that they are expected to learn and how we go about measuring what is*

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important or how we're going to go about teaching them how to understand what they read..I haven't had any training provided by any of those.

Kim:*...maybe (professional development in) time management because that's usually a huge issue with teachers...I have to be honest with you, I don't have any training in it through my district or through any workshops at a University. I think it's something that I've always heard being talked about and I just checked I've been here eighteen years and there's always been talk about it like when would be a good idea to just teach this reading while using your social studies in the end.*

Karen:*...be part of workshops that would look at that I think that would enrich how I can deliver my instruction...But I haven't really been on, I haven't been on many workshops.*

Angelina:*I'm sure I don't know what's offered in terms of training. I mean social studies coaches and PD on meaningful ways to infuse different skills into social studies..Our district has not provided specific training.*

Beth:*I think any sort of training that would help me to integrate social studies into literacy would be helpful...Unfortunately I don't think I've ever had any such training...*

“Show Me” - The need to observe skilled practitioners in action

Colin:*...If I can see someone else doing it, that would be a good thing...I think that's always a good thing, watching and getting someone who is an expert on doing whatever you're trying to*

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learn, in this case literacy integration with social studies. I think seeing that would help everybody.

Marilyn: *I wish someone would show me. I'm trying to use these, OK. So I would like someone to show me how to use the social studies weekly for example.*

Mary: *I think having experts come and show you what things you can do that you probably don't even know you can do would just give us a different perspective on how to incorporate literacy.*

Amy: *I feel like it would be helpful for somebody who is doing a really good job with it or if we could go visit another teacher and were really in there so we could visit them and see what they're doing. Sometimes I feel like (we need to) make sure that we're doing a good job because I don't even know if we are doing a good job.*

Kim: *Anything that is going to model it for us...I think like I said a demo lesson or two would be nice...I think that would be helpful but I don't say that they need to run a giant workshop or have 6 weeks of training or something like that. Maybe 1 or 2 demo lessons... I don't always feel that teachers need these coaches in their room watching them teaching them how to do something. I feel like if you show them once or twice in a demo lesson and have a discussion about what you're looking for and how to go about doing it...I think a couple of lessons, I think that's what teachers always need to (see) demo lessons...*

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Beth:...to be able to go see other teachers doing this so that I could emulate that and include even more subjects into literacy, such as science....observing somebody else doing this...Just not knowing how exactly to go about it like I said previously...seeing somebody doing this effectively I think would teach me how to do it more effectively and having the materials to do this I think would be a huge help... and observing somebody actually teaching this effectively where they are integrating the two subjects would be helpful.

The Role of Nonfiction, Informational Texts in Teaching Literacy Through Social Studies

Colin: I use nonfiction informational text to help kids learn literacy skills. I like it..A project that we recently did...(students) were researching colonial America and they were able to go on different websites and (engaged in) different reading using different books and articles and we taught a lot of lessons to do with discovering the main idea of these articles that they might be reading in a book (or article)...

Marilyn: Kids can learn from nonfiction texts and historical fiction. Different texts actually helps learning, it helps to get your information from different sides, (this) is important information...We were really focused on text because I noticed that my students doing their nonfiction reading unit we're still struggling with reading nonfiction and I thought this is a really great place to kind of keep reviewing those features and understanding what we're doing for non-fiction.

Mary: We have a section on Henry Hudson and it focuses on a very small part of his exploration whereas after research by the teachers we have articles and other books that explain more about

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his voyages. So when the students read these other texts they're fascinated by how much Henry Hudson did that goes beyond what the textbook talks about, the fact that it's really interesting...I think it's very important to incorporate different informational texts because part of our reading skills is synthesizing information and realizing that when you read informational text you must get information from different sources to get a complete picture. If we only use the social studies textbook, the students are getting a very limited view of the social studies concepts so I try to incorporate as many different informational texts on different levels for each topic we study. The students practice synthesizing the information and being able to discuss or write about the topic in a complete way and not through only one lens.

Amy: *(The kids) love research like Henry Hudson... we read in the textbook about him. The kids were intrigued by him so then we read another article separately and then we watched 2 videos and we took notes... I would say 90% of them were using the regular books like the paperback and then I think everybody found a book...at least one and then some of them used the textbook in addition to that..I did do some whole class modeling and they did read. We did have some passages that we read together. We had read...about Roanoke and read about Jamestown and we read about Henry Hudson so we had done that and then we did some historical fiction reading. But during this project it was just nonfiction colonial America books so most of them were using books or the social studies textbook...The reading was...using any historical fiction or was a pretty much just a nonfiction informational text or both. The students basically brought the carts of books in here...and I just told them to read and I said pick a book you're interested in and read it. Once we started to read a little bit and a little bit more and for a few days in a row we just read. They (students) wanted to know if they had a job and I told them don't worry about the job*

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right now, just read and then if they weren't interested in something they picked a different book. Once they found something that they were really interested in.

Julia: *Kids who are better readers might be at an advantage depending on what text I'm using so this actually helps students learn social studies (content) better because they're taking ownership of the learning through their own reading comprehension... But in this particular case of course (the tribes) it's very easy to do it within a social studies lesson...Today I taught literacy in the social studies lesson. So the literacy standard is that readers ask questions before, during, and after reading so we were practicing that by asking questions about the Native Americans of the Plains before reading about them. We raised questions that we had hoped to be answered through the reading and those questions of course are going to guide us and navigate us through the actual reading of the book. Based on the title...the students brainstormed some questions they had hoped to be answered in the reading and then they went off to read. If their questions were answered they jotted what the answer was. For those questions that weren't answered on our chart...(with) further research (the students) will be able to find the answers to those questions.*

Kim: *Teachers need to have hard copies so if there was a binder that said here's your reading lesson, text features, here's the Native American unit to help you teach it and bring it together in one place....I really felt like after this lesson that I did a lot of good talking about the reading they learned about Native Americans. I feel like today I covered reading and social studies thoroughly today, where social studies usually gets bumped out when you start to run out of time, unfortunately...As you saw through my lesson, I had to keep reminding them we were learning*

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about Native Americans. I always went back and said what we just learned from that paragraph. It's a struggle but I think it's a good struggle that will work itself out.

Karen: *Actually this year we read two different articles from the Patriots and the Redcoats articles from each perspective. It was written (from the perspective of) what happened and some of them were in agreement with the side that did not win. In history (this can happen) because of the way it was written but it made them think and they had to keep reading it again to determine what does that really mean? Then they understood that wasn't good you know but (it generates) a lot of conversation... Scholastic News and sometimes there are sections in there that actually deal with cause and effect and give specific examples that deal with social studies topics.*

Angelina: *I think you need the nonfiction, informational texts to provide the students with the necessary information they need to then apply it in a deeper way..It's a good thing to use nonfiction materials to learn about history so it's connecting the two subjects really nicely... If the students are engaged in a social studies textbook or explore a nonfiction book, they are learning social studies while still working on the reading and literacy piece...The students made use of nonfiction texts and used a lot of the nonfiction reading skills.*

Beth: *It helps the students. Nonfiction texts, as long as they're on the student's' level... they end up understanding the content better than just listening to a teacher lecture about the content.*

Role of the Social Studies Textbook

Marilyn: *We still have the grey 1980 book that we still use because we don't have anything better. This could be either that one with the Goldfinch on it or there's like a blue one that we have one class (set)... with the grey books from 1985 I felt like I had that when I was a kid and when I was in 4th grade and not a lot of it changed...*

Mary: *We have a section on Henry Hudson and it focuses on a very small part of his exploration whereas after research by the teachers we have articles and other books that explain more about his voyages. So when the students read these other texts they're fascinated by how much Henry Hudson did that goes beyond what the textbook talks about, the fact that it's really interesting...I think it's very important to incorporate different informational texts because part of our reading skills is synthesizing information and realizing that when you read informational text you must get information from different sources to get a complete picture. If we only use the social studies textbook, the students are getting a very limited view of the social studies concepts so I try to incorporate as many different informational texts on different levels for each topic we study. The students practice synthesizing the information and being able to discuss or write about the topic in a complete way and not through only one lens...With the social studies reading we often read as a class altogether out of the textbook so I know the basic information that the students are getting is all the same but I also know the fourth grade text is on a fourth grade level which not all my students are reading at so I ask comprehension questions as we go.*

Amy: *We do have a textbook and we have an old textbook...(The kids) love research like Henry Hudson... we read in the textbook about him. The kids were intrigued by him so then we read*

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another article separately and then we watched 2 videos and we took notes...Your social studies textbook, (It's an appropriate resource for) maybe about 5% of the kids...some of them used the textbook...I would say 90% of them were using the regular books like the paperback and then I think everybody found a book...at least one and then some of them used the textbook in addition to that...We had read...about Roanoke and read about Jamestown and we read about Henry Hudson so we had done that and then we did some historical fiction reading. But during this project it was just nonfiction colonial America books so most of them were using books or the social studies textbook...

Julia: *I personally think the social studies texts are outdated and they're written on a high level for some students...It's hard for them to read independently so when I use the social studies textbook I'm pretty much reading to them and hoping that they're following along as many of them cannot be that independent...so let's say we have a Social Studies textbook okay so we have a teacher's Edition...that kind of helps us to navigate through the text but I guess training would help to see how I can really utilize a text like the textbook to the maximum...*

Angelina: *If the students are engaged in a social studies textbook or explore a nonfiction book, they are learning social studies while still working on the reading and literacy piece.*

Teachers hold overwhelmingly positive perceptions on teaching literacy skills through social studies content.

Marilyn: *Kids can learn from nonfiction texts and historical fiction. Different texts actually helps learning, it helps to get your information from different sides, (this) is important*

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information...I've been doing it because you want them to understand...I'm trying to find something else and just incorporate it and know that they're really understanding, that they really understand...

Mary: *I found out how important it is in social studies and it's not something I did my first few years...my team and I try to incorporate as much writing as we can...My schedule is very well done in that I feel I have plenty of time to teach social studies every day and I'm not rushing through lessons but if for example my social studies were 30 minutes a day, trying to get through the material and also using literacy skills regularly would be a challenge... right now it's an hour and if I were in the 30 minutes a day that would be more difficult because you're trying to cover this information and create a complete lesson with an opening and a closing and all the practice in the middle and in 30 minutes that is very difficult to do with incorporating skills. Should you do 30 minutes every single day? I do 60 of time right now.*

Amy: *I just love it and I feel like it really helps the students not only understand the social studies content...but it totally immerses them in reading and writing and they get so excited about it. Even kids who don't even like writing end up enjoying writing because of the content that we're doing and the content is exciting to them...they love it so I think I feel like I'm doing a pretty good job with immersing both of them, literacy and social studies...Every single time we went through the simulation they had to write about their experiences as if they were a pilgrim boy or girl. So they started out their Journal about why they're living in Holland, I can't live in England, they went through the whole thing...It work(ed) out like super clean.*

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Julia: *I mean I think it's a great thing. I think the kids are excited... it is going to be like when I taught middle school language arts and social studies so it's a lot of our topics through novels. You know we learned about the Holocaust through Number The Stars so we did a lot of Novels and that's how we learned our content area. Again I wasn't trained, it was just what I thought was right.*

Kim: *But the balancing act would be fine, I don't think it's necessarily difficult but it would take practice... but in making a whole separate reading unit it wouldn't make sense...I can see how there could be the debate but I think it just requires a good balancing act...social studies teachers who actually help kids learn by using (reading strategies and teaching them)...It's beneficial...This is the first year that we've seen it come together so clearly and it makes us understand that we want to do this and that we want to bring it all together to do a lot of cross curricular activities...With that said, as we find these things (materials) like we have in this great Native American unit we can pull it together and do it really well with this...*

Karen: *But if you're having them read things and taking notes they could really just look over the notes and you still know they're getting a deeper knowledge and you're still getting at it because you can have an overarching question that you're trying to help them understand. This helps students to understand what's happening with people and how they're relating, which is really what we want people to know about social studies. Yes you can know some facts and know some interesting ideas but really to understand social studies to understand how groups of people have channeled through history, that is what is important. I don't know, that's my belief of History teaching that it's not always about the facts...*

Angelina: *I want the students to use the skills that they learn in reading to support what they are doing in social studies. Using a nonfiction informational text basically builds a factual foundation for the kids so that maybe the historical fiction sources are more meaningful to use later..I don't know how you could really learn social studies without including some kind of reading skills anyway...It's a good thing to use nonfiction materials to learn about history so it's connecting the two subjects really nicely...Using content area material to teach literacy is a great strategy in all subjects. I don't think that it takes away from social studies at all. I think that if you are using those skills, it's benefiting both subjects. If the students are engaged in a social studies textbook or explore a nonfiction book, they are learning social studies while still working on the reading and literacy piece, which I think is really the base of everything kids should be learning in school...I look at Social Studies as way to reinforce what you're teaching in reading...I think the students are always reading nonfiction whether it's a chapter in a textbook or an article to support their learning...I feel that all social studies activities need to have some literacy components... The literacy component for this last project simulation doesn't have so much to do with students reading on their own, which I do feel is a negative aspect of the simulation.*

Teaching literacy through social studies “fits well”.

Colin: *I don't think you can do one thing exclusively, you know. I don't think I could do reading literacy skills during social studies for a hundred percent...I don't think that's a good practice but I also don't think that kids should be doing interactive things all the time. There's a balance. I don't know exactly what that means... so there are times when you do teach literacy skills explicitly... (like) the main idea example..I think that unit lent itself to it, that was a big part...in our reading unit of study. It wasn't even during a social studies time so that entire unit was perfect for that. When it comes to teaching other types of social studies are there other social studies units whether it's Native Americans or Colonists of Jamestown or the Pilgrims...*

Marilyn: *I think it helps the students learn the concepts. I think they understand what they are reading better and they're applying it this way. I feel that it's not just learning a boring fact, it's learning reading non-fiction...I've been doing this way of reading (in) social studies. In September they don't question it like “Why are we doing reading in social studies?” It's just become the norm... Approaching social studies through a reading lens actually helps kids...You need these kinds of activities, focusing on the literacy skill and focusing on content because I feel it's another way to keep reinforcing them...You need these kinds of activities, focusing on the literacy skill and focusing on content because I feel it's another way to keep reinforcing them.*

Mary: *I think it's a great reinforcement for the students to see that the skills that they use in reading are not in isolation but should be used anytime they read nonfiction text. I also think using those skills helps show me their understanding of the 4th grade social studies text or if I need to modify it for some of my learners who need more support in reading.*

Amy: *I just love it and I feel like it really helps the students not only understand the social studies content...but it totally immerses them in reading and writing and they get so excited about it. Even kids who don't even like writing end up enjoying writing because of the content that we're doing and the content is exciting to them...they love it so I think I feel like I'm doing a pretty good job with immersing both of them, literacy and social studies...I think that it definitely helps them learn the social studies content because they're not even realizing that they're focusing on the social studies content because they're like reading to find information. Then they learn so much about social studies too if you're doing it during reading and writing. Then they end up teaching each other that or if somebody was absent they end up teaching each other so you can tell if they understood it (the content). I had a student...we were reviewing and he...talked about it and we wrote about it and they were so excited. The kids actually love social studies, it's (one of) their favorite subjects...I usually start with the story verbally and then they get all excited and they want to read about it and they want to really learn more about it so that's when you can get them to read about it. So I find that the students are completely engaged. They love social studies because they're reading so much about it and I think (that is because) I brought in writing...I thought they wouldn't like that but they actually really love it so I think it goes hand-in-hand...I feel like the literacy and social studies go hand-in-hand. I don't know how you can learn about social studies without reading about it. I'm just telling the story which of course is to get them excited about it...Yes. I feel like because (District Name)...uses the reading and writing workshop model and one of our units is colonial America so this makes things very easy to intertwine the two...*

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Julia: *But I still think that it's like a win-win because you have to teach those skills and strategies so why not do it through your (social studies) content? Okay here's the thing, we have to teach content right? And we also have to teach reading strategies. To me it would make sense to do that through nonfiction informational text related to the content...For me I think it's a bonus to have them do literacy because now I'm connecting the reading, the writing and all of that (content)...I feel that it is very simple in social studies to engage in (literacy based) activities because quite often we are reading material so we're asking questions, we're finding main ideas we are looking for details or synthesizing information, and we are making connections across text...*

Kim: *As you saw through my lesson, I had to keep reminding them we were learning about Native Americans. I always went back and said what we just learned from that paragraph. It's a struggle but I think it's a good struggle that will work itself out...I can see it both ways but I think it's going to be the job of the teacher to really make it a balance...it really saves on time and it makes the kids understand that what they're doing. Any subject area that ties into something else it's not just like we're doing reading and that's it...*

Karen: *I also feel like you are using your time more wisely when you teach literacy through social studies because you get more for your buck so to speak because when you're teaching literacy you can be bringing in some of your Social Studies topics and still teaching how to read and write. When you were teaching social studies you can bring in these literacy topics whether it's answering long essays looking at cause and effect but you end up teaching these (social studies) concepts to deepen the students' knowledge of them in both areas...You could be reading*

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a sentence and there are so many parts to the sentence that give you information but at the same time these are the types of sentences that really deepen your reading skills...But if you're having them read things and taking notes they could really just look over the notes and you still know they're getting a deeper knowledge and you're still getting at it because you can have an overarching question that you're trying to help them understand. This helps students to understand what's happening with people and how they're relating, which is really what we want people to know about social studies. Yes you can know some facts and know some interesting ideas but really to understand social studies to understand how groups of people have channeled through history, that is what is important. I don't know, that's my belief of History teaching that it's not always about the facts...when they are using the literacy skills they are thinking stronger about the discipline because they are saying I want to study this person and what evidence shows me about this person... I think this is when reading skills or literacy skills are what you want to use...I feel when they are able to use the literary devices it deepens their knowledge of the social studies material...I'm in agreement with those people (who believe) that it fits well. Any historian or scientist needs to report on what they're studying and in order to do that you have to be literate..but sometimes there's some background teaching and things that you can always do that are related to language arts. You know, it (literacy instruction) should be helping with social studies, supporting it...I feel anyway there is going to be some overlap...at other times it lends itself very nicely because they can be writing and reading and learning through the literature...by the time they took their benchmark test they were using those strategies within a new situation so it's helping them even in social studies as well as in the language arts.

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Angelina: *Using a nonfiction informational text basically builds a factual foundation for the kids so that maybe the historical fiction sources are more meaningful to use later...It's a good thing to use nonfiction materials to learn about history so it's connecting the two subjects really nicely...Using content area material to teach literacy is a great strategy in all subjects. I don't think that it takes away from social studies at all. I think that if you are using those skills, it's benefiting both subjects. If the students are engaged in a social studies textbook or explore a nonfiction book, they are learning social studies while still working on the reading and literacy piece, which I think is really the base of everything kids should be learning in school... I think the students are always reading nonfiction whether it's a chapter in a textbook or an article to support their learning...I feel that all social studies activities need to have some literacy components.*

Teaching literacy through social studies helps students to develop a deeper and more meaningful understanding of social studies content and concepts.

Colin: *I knew I had a text that was hard for them, at least some of them and I thought by teaching a skill or literacy skill with that it would help them comprehend the text which was social studies content better, that's what happened...*

Marilyn: *I think it helps the students learn the concepts. I think they understand what they are reading better and they're applying it this way. I feel that it's not just learning a boring fact, it's learning reading non-fiction...I've been doing this way of reading (in) social studies. In September they don't question it like "Why are we doing reading in social studies?" It's just become the norm... Approaching social studies through a reading lens actually helps kids...You*

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need these kinds of activities, focusing on the literacy skill and focusing on content because I feel it's another way to keep reinforcing them.

Mary: *I definitely don't want to put any words in your mouth at all but I want to just confirm something that I think I'm hearing. I get that it's more complex to actually need to think about literacy skills in teaching in addition to the content but with regard to the question... about whether you think that focusing on the literacy skills actually helps kids to learn the content. You were in agreement that it that it does, right? Yes...I think it definitely helps...*

Amy: *I just love it and I feel like it really helps the students not only understand the social studies content...but it totally immerses them in reading and writing and they get so excited about it. Even kids who don't even like writing end up enjoying writing because of the content that we're doing and the content is exciting to them...they love it so I think I feel like I'm doing a pretty good job with immersing both of them, literacy and social studies...I think that it definitely helps students learn to have an informational unit in our reading and writing program and most of the students are reading about history and historical events and they absolutely loved it. They learned so much about those historical events and then they ended up teaching us about them so they're reading about it and learning about it. I think it's great...I think that it definitely helps them learn the social studies content because they're not even realizing that they're focusing on the social studies content because they're like reading to find information. Then they learn so much about social studies too if you're doing it during reading and writing. Then they end up teaching each other that or if somebody was absent they end up teaching each other so you can tell if they understood it (the content). I had a student...we were reviewing and he...talked about*

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it and we wrote about it and they were so excited. The kids actually love social studies, it's (one of) their favorite subjects.

Julia: *Okay here's the thing, we have to teach content right? And we also have to teach reading strategies. To me it would make sense to do that through nonfiction informational text related to the content...(Teaching literacy through social studies) actually helps...it really saves on time and it makes the kids understand that what they're doing. Any subject area that ties into something else it's not just like we're doing reading and that's it...*

Karen: *I also feel like you are using your time more wisely when you teach literacy through social studies because you get more for your buck so to speak because when you're teaching literacy you can be bringing in some of your Social Studies topics and still teaching how to read and write. When you were teaching social studies you can bring in these literacy topics whether it's answering long essays looking at cause and effect but you end up teaching these (social studies) concepts to deepen the students' knowledge of them in both areas...You could be reading a sentence and there are so many parts to the sentence that give you information but at the same time these are the types of sentences that really deepen your reading skills...when they are using the literacy skills they are thinking stronger about the discipline because they are saying I want to study this person and what evidence shows me about this person... I think this is when reading skills or literacy skills are what you want to use...I feel when they are able to use the literary devices it deepens their knowledge of the social studies material...by the time they took their benchmark test they were using those strategies within a new situation so it's helping them even in social studies as well as in the language arts.*

Angelina: *Using a nonfiction informational text basically builds a factual foundation for the kids so that maybe the historical fiction sources are more meaningful to use later...Using content area material to teach literacy is a great strategy in all subjects. I don't think that it takes away from social studies at all. I think that if you are using those skills, it's benefiting both subjects. If the students are engaged in a social studies textbook or explore a nonfiction book, they are learning social studies while still working on the reading and literacy piece, which I think is really the base of everything kids should be learning in school... I want the students to use the skills that they learn in reading to support what they are doing in social studies.*

Beth: *Students are learning about the topic, I do think that some topics will lend themselves a little easier to teaching it through literacy rather than just separate social studies unit and literacy unit. In the colonial America unit I've done projects also through literacy on the Jamestown Colony. I think that in 5th grade teaching that through the literacy unit has increased their knowledge because they're learning not through a teacher specifically teaching them that topic so I think that process helps some students to develop a stronger understanding.*