High School Social Studies Teachers' Perceptions and Practices Using Workshop Model: A Qualitative Action Research Case Study

Joseph Marangell

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Abstract

The purpose of this action research case study was to examine how a job-embedded professional development approach influenced high school social studies teachers’ perceptions and practices related to a workshop model of instruction. Three research questions guided this work: (1) How do teachers’ perceptions related to the workshop model used within social studies classrooms change over time? (2) How do teachers’ practices related to the workshop model used within social studies classrooms change over time? (3) How do teachers’ perceptions of disciplinary literacy and the workshop model influence their classroom practices?

Participants included two high school Modern World History teachers who participated in weekly professional development experiences related to the workshop model over a 12-week period. Teachers subsequently employed the strategies that they learned during the professional development sessions in their own classes. Qualitative data sources were collected, including three semi-structured interviews with each participant, three classroom observations of each participant, lesson artifacts from observations, professional development meeting minutes, and teacher-developed artifacts. The researcher also maintained a journal as a secondary source.

Data were analyzed using a constant comparative approach and ultimately resulted in three broad themes: setting expectations, promoting engagement, and sustaining engagement through responsive instruction. Overall, teachers’ perceptions about the workshop model improved over the course of the study, with both participants
citing its benefits in promoting student engagement in their classrooms. Consequently, as
the study progressed, participants employed a more inquiry-based approach that
emphasized the development of students’ literacy skills. Although both teachers stated at
the outset of the study that it was their role to prepare students for postsecondary success,
by the end of the study, they were able to identify and implement specific strategies that
supported that goal (e.g., developing arguments, evaluating sources). Although the study
focused on the implementation of this approach within one instructional setting, its
structure might be useful for other practitioners who would like to consider the same
questions within their own contexts.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

It is the last week of August, and students eagerly enter their new social studies classroom. The teacher—an experienced educator who has taught this same high school class for many years—directs students to find their assigned seats among the neatly arranged rows of desks. As they wait for the bell to ring, students wonder what will be in store for them this year: Will they be working together on projects? Will they get to collaborate in groups? How will they be graded? Will they be able to have a voice in their learning?

Students’ enthusiasm and curiosity, however, quickly fade when the teacher passes out the course textbook (an outdated account of “modern” world history) and instructs the class that they will be covering one section each day and taking regular quizzes on the assigned content. The primary mode of instruction will be lecture with the occasional opportunity for group work and open-ended projects. If students attend class regularly, take copious notes based on the teacher’s presentations, and then study those notes for the test, all will be well.

Fast forward several weeks, and each day of class blurs into the next. Students spend the majority of instructional time as passive consumers of content, and rarely do they have the opportunity to engage in extended periods of application, discourse, or critical thinking. Their “literacy” skills are developed by completing assigned readings with minimal use of strategy-based instruction. Even though students have access to their
own district-issued Chromebooks, those devices are usually stored under their desks despite the wealth of course-related resources that are available. Freire (1970/2005) cautioned against a banking concept of education, through which “knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (p. 72). Decades later, this approach is still evident in today’s classrooms despite the presence of content standards and pedagogical techniques that call for students to construct knowledge actively (Moje, 2017).

**Problem of Practice**

As the social studies instructional leader for a suburban school district in New England, I am responsible for supervising, evaluating, and coaching social studies teachers to increase their effectiveness in the classroom. Consequently, much of my own work centers around improving instructional practices and student learning. I frequently wonder—like many social studies educators in my district and beyond—how to position teachers to address the demands of my discipline’s content standards while maximizing student engagement in the process.

The apparent lack of rigor described above is not necessarily the “fault” of the teachers or students involved. Social studies teachers, in particular, often feel pressured to cover content that may later appear on state standardized tests or end-of-course exams (Graham, Kerkhoff, & Spires, 2017; Pace, 2012). Consequently, a whole-class approach to instruction is often overused due to its associated efficiency in dispensing content and clarifying students’ misconceptions or knowledge gaps (Moje, 2017). Likewise, students are often complacent in learning this way because, quite simply, they expect their teachers to do much of the thinking in class. Ultimately, albeit sometimes unintentionally, such a structure impedes the development of students’ disciplinary literacy skills and
prevents them from taking any ownership in their learning (Grant, Swan, & Lee, 2017).

If social studies educators desire to see significant gains in their students’ achievement, the traditional “teacher as sage on the stage” mindset must be replaced with one that values collaboration, research, and personalization. A student-centered curriculum is hardly a new concept, though. Dewey (1938) advocated inquiry-based learning decades ago, and Bruner (1960) later advised teachers to embrace a constructivist instructional approach that reflected students’ developmental levels, interests, and prior knowledge. Their contributions underpin the conceptual organization of current standards initiatives, such as the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework (NCSS, 2013), as well as much of the prevalent thinking concerning effective curricular design (e.g., Erickson, 2007; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Furthermore, specific disciplinary literacy skills cannot simply supplement content-based instruction; these skills must ground students’ learning experiences in every lesson. For example, as new social studies standards are adopted nationwide, students are more frequently expected to generate their own research questions, conduct investigations, and draw evidence-based conclusions (Grant, 2013; Grant et al., 2017; NCSS, 2013)—all processes that require students to apply the tools of the discipline to construct new knowledge. Naturally, teachers must remain subject area experts; however, their responsibility now extends to teaching students how to think like historians instead of telling them what historians think (Wineburg & Martin, 2004).

A workshop model is a student-centered instructional approach that can support inquiry-based learning and literacy development in various contexts. Donald Graves (1975) initially proposed the concept upon finding that students who learned in choice-
based and structured environments improved in their writing. Donald Murray (1982) and Lucy Calkins (1994) expanded upon this work and suggested that teachers could facilitate growth in both reading and writing skills when they engaged in these same processes with their students. Rather than relying solely on whole-group instruction, teachers using a workshop model use one-on-one conferences to provide students with individualized feedback as they are actively engaged in learning new concepts or skills (Graves, 1978). The process allows students to emerge as the producers of content rather than the receivers of it.

Nancie Atwell’s (1987) groundbreaking book *In the Middle* first oriented teachers to a practical model for implementing both reading and writing workshops in secondary classrooms. Atwell (2007) contended that providing students with choices in the texts they read and types of writing they do remain the cornerstones of a workshop. Cris Tovani (2011, 2017) posited that the basic components of the model—opening structure, self-directed work time, teacher/student conferences, and closing segment—can empower students in any content area to take ownership of their learning. Students need to be the ones who are reading, writing, and thinking if we expect them to become proficient in those same skills (Bennett, 2009).

Ultimately, teachers prefer to use instructional strategies that reflect their personal philosophies of education (Curry & Cherner, 2016). Sometimes, even despite reporting the importance of inquiry- and literacy-based instruction, social studies teachers default to formulaic or fact-based lessons (Colwell, 2016) that essentially “[reproduce] simplified version[s] of textbook knowledge” (Pace, 2012, p. 351). Such a disconnect between perceptions and practice may stem from teachers’ unpreparedness to implement
innovative strategies with fidelity (Gewertz, 2013). Meaningful professional development may improve social studies teachers’ willingness and abilities to support students’ development of disciplinary-based reading and writing skills (De La Paz, Malkus, Monte-Sano, & Montanaro, 2011; Nowell, 2016).

**Research Questions and Purpose of Study**

Qualitative research allows us to study how individuals generate and apply understandings, particularly considering their unique personal experiences and histories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). With this definition in mind, I explored the following questions using an action research case study approach:

1. How do teachers’ perceptions related to the workshop model used within social studies classrooms change over time?
2. How do teachers’ practices related to the workshop model used within social studies classrooms change over time?
3. How do teachers’ perceptions of disciplinary literacy and the workshop model influence their classroom practices?

These questions are of local importance since classroom observations of teachers are frequently “content heavy” and consequently score below proficient for student engagement on my district’s educator evaluation rubric. Likewise, district achievement scores on state standardized assessments (e.g., SAT, SBAC) are consistently below the state average. De La Paz et al. (2011) suggested that a district’s investment in high-quality teacher professional development may lead to improved student performance on assessments due to the resulting changes in classroom practices. Moreover, sustained professional development opportunities may result in favorable teacher perceptions.
toward disciplinary literacy—also leading to higher-quality instruction (Curry & Cherner, 2016).

In this study, I took the role of “participant as observer” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 144) as I worked directly with a subset of teachers from the district’s high school social studies department. As a participant, I facilitated professional development relevant to the use of a workshop model within the secondary social studies classroom, and as an observer, I recorded and interpreted the data collected throughout the study.

My personal interest in disciplinary literacy stems from my prior work in this area with a reading colleague at a local university. I recognize that not all students or even educators traditionally view content area teaching and learning from a literacy standpoint (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2017; Wineburg & Martin, 2004), necessitating that I be mindful of my own teaching preferences throughout the implementation of the study.

Furthermore, given my supervisory position over the participants, I needed to be careful and proactive in explaining the rationale for my approach to participants to ensure that I could remedy any concerns or provide needed clarifications when necessary (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

**Research Design**

Educators have the opportunity to “reinvent” themselves each year with new courses to teach, new groups of students to meet, and new instructional approaches to use. In fact, experimentation with different techniques does not need to wait until a new school year begins. Action research positions teachers to identify significant problems of practice within their own settings and find ways to improve their own work or the work of other practitioners in the process (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Efron and Ravid (2013)
suggest that when a problem of practice is guided by a clear, specific, timely, and coherent rationale, student learning is bound to improve, as well.

**Action research and qualitative methods.** Action research is, indeed, a type of formal research with clearly defined objectives, processes, and methodologies (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Herr & Anderson, 2015); however, it differs from traditional research since it is most often conducted by individuals who are engrained within the culture of an organization. Even though both types of research typically follow a common cycle of planning, acting, developing, and reflecting (Mertler, 2017), action research is an inductive and iterative process that may be repeated multiple times within a single study (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

When implemented with fidelity, a systematic and reflective process that allows educators to think deeply about their own practices has the potential to facilitate both personal and institutional growth (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Action research, as one approach to guide this work, can empower educators to improve their own conditions through shared inquiry, collaboration, and reflective decision-making (Herr & Anderson, 2015). For these reasons, I hoped that an action research framework would bring about transformative change to my setting.

A qualitative case study offers “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 37). To that end, participants for this study included a purposeful sample of the two ninth-grade Modern World History teachers at my district’s high school. This grade-level team was selected since both teachers had participated in previous training related to inquiry-based instruction, disciplinary literacy, and workshop model; however, they also reflected variation in terms of experience
Alex is a newer teacher who was required to take literacy-based courses in college and began teaching after the implementation of the *Common Core State Standards*, and Leslie is in her 16th year of teaching and serves as a mentor to beginning teachers within the district. Both instructors taught heterogeneously grouped Modern World History courses that spanned content from the 1500s through the 1900s.

Yin (1981) added, “the distinguishing characteristic of [a] case study is that it attempts to examine (a) a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when (b) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 58). The present study examined the perceptions and practices of Alex and Leslie within their natural work settings as they participated in professional development related to disciplinary literacy and the workshop model, applied their learning to their classroom practices, and reflected upon their experiences throughout a 12-week time segment.

**Professional development.** An Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) Research Center study found that job-embedded professional development, in which teachers learned new techniques and immediately applied them to their own practices, was highly effective in improving teachers’ perceived readiness in approaching standards-based instruction (Gewertz, 2013). Ongoing professional development throughout the 12-week segment of this study was, therefore, job-embedded and responsive to teachers’ previous learning experiences. I facilitated 45-minute professional development sessions weekly during teachers’ common planning periods. Sessions included presentations of possible instructional strategies using components of Tovani’s (2011, 2017) workshop structure, planning lessons using new instructional strategies, and debriefing following lesson implementation. Additional after-school meetings were scheduled during which teachers
created or modified formative and summative assessments based on their weekly planning work. I maintained a journal to track my own perceptions so that I remained “mindful of the different roles [I] take in the study” (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 125). In the journal, I documented after each session my own perceptions as well as general observations of participants’ perceptions. A review of these data during the analysis phase of the research allowed me to detect patterns as well as to identify the possible factors that contributed to the study’s outcomes.

**Data Sources**

Qualitative case studies typically include a collection of multiple sources of data to describe or analyze a case (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Consequently, teacher interviews, classroom observations, and a review of classroom and professional development artifacts were used to develop an understanding of the research questions for this study. Three individual interviews with each participant were conducted throughout the study, each designed to gather teachers’ self-reported perceptions relevant to the use of a workshop model of instruction at different points in time. Furthermore, three 10- to 15-minute classroom observations (conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of the study) enabled me to record data specific to classroom practices as well as to infer the relationship between teachers’ perceptions and practices. Finally, a review of lesson- and perception-based artifacts provided additional information related to teachers’ implementation of a workshop model as well as their own written reflections for using such practices.

**Data Analysis**

A primary goal for researchers in qualitative studies is to “present insights and conclusions that ring true to readers, practitioners, and researchers” (Merriam & Tisdell,
2016, p. 238). For that to happen, researchers must ensure that their findings are credible and that the data they collected were acquired in an ethical manner (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). How researchers determine the quality of rigor and trustworthiness in a study may vary depending on their philosophical assumptions, worldviews, and the lenses through which they are viewing the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

In action research studies, data analysis typically occurs both during and after the data collection stages (Efron & Ravid, 2013). To that end, I used formative data analysis techniques to guide my decision-making throughout the study and summative data analysis techniques to interpret the data upon completion of the study (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Formative techniques included a review of evidence collected after each professional development session, along with interview and observation data, to determine my next steps with participants. For summative data analysis, I used a constant comparative method, beginning with an open coding process by identifying initial categories from early sources of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Next, I refined those categories based on an analysis of subsequent sets of data. In that process, I continually revised or refined my initial groupings (Glaser, 1965). I continued to analyze data, refine categories, and generate subthemes until a level of saturation was reached (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Throughout the data analysis process, I maintained rigor and trustworthiness using a variety of techniques. Creswell and Miller (2000) advised qualitative researchers to triangulate data by corroborating information gleaned from multiple sources (e.g., interviews with written reflections, observations with artifacts). Moreover, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested that researchers use member checking techniques when
employing interviews as sources of data. To that end, I solicited feedback from participants so they could review my transcripts and critique my initial coding. Finally, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that peer review is an effective technique for helping to refine one’s interpretations of data. Another administrator who has also earned proficiency in observing teachers using Danielson’s (2013) *Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument* reviewed my observation evidence to ensure that it was objective and linked to the relevant components of the framework.

**Significance of the Study**

Much of the current research related to social studies teacher practice is centered around inquiry-based curriculum development (Grant et al., 2017) as well as strategies for promoting disciplinary literacy skills (e.g., Monte-Sano, De La Paz, & Felton, 2014; Wineburg, Martin, & Monte-Sano, 2013). While some studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between a workshop model and social studies standards (Lubig, 2006), most of the available research consists of its application in language arts classrooms. Given the emphasis on social studies literacy skills within the *Common Core State Standards* (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) and the *C3 Framework* (NCSS, 2013), there exists a need to research the most effective pedagogical techniques that will potentially empower teachers to enhance classroom practice (Gewertz, 2013; Gilles, Wang, Smith, & Johnson, 2013; Nowell, 2016).

As an administrator, my reasons for exploring this topic extended beyond the scope of this study. I hoped that a personal inquiry into this problem with a subset of teachers within my department would not only improve the design of the specific course targeted within the study but that I could use that same learning to facilitate similar work
in other grade levels. While generalizability is not necessarily the intent of action research (Herr & Anderson, 2015), other practitioners in different districts who are attempting to teach to the same standards may be able to use elements of this study as a springboard for further curriculum modifications in their own settings.

Finally, I hoped that the use of a workshop model for teaching social studies would demonstrate that all students—regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status—would feel comfortable taking intellectual risks as they explored topics that were of personal interest to their own lives. Boutte (2016) stated that culturally relevant instruction must be intentional, ongoing, and responsive to the needs of one’s students. The individualized nature of the workshop model allows such differentiation to be possible (Daniels, 2014).

Limitations and Delimitations

At the outset of the study, I realized that participant-generated data collected in interviews and artifacts might be somewhat guarded given the supervisor-employee relationship between participants and myself. I met with both teachers prior to engaging in any work to clarify our roles, expectations, and intentions (Lapadat, Motus, & Fisher, 2005) and to assure them that their participation would not affect their performance evaluations in any way. The participating teachers were tenured educators with whom I already had a good rapport. I looked for their feedback during all aspects of the research and adjusted the progression of study based on any common concerns or confusions that they identified (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Since qualitative research is “emergent and flexible” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 18), it is appropriate for elements of the study to change as needs are identified.
Case studies present certain limitations relative to data analysis that may be addressed through proactive planning at the outset of the study. Timely analysis can be difficult, if not overwhelming, since multiple types of data are being collected—sometimes concurrently. It is essential to keep a clear organizational system or database that facilitates the prompt analysis and classification of evidence (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Furthermore, as with all case studies with purposeful sampling, generalization to a larger population is difficult due to the small sample size ($n = 2$) and confinement to one grade level and school district (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Transferability to future researchers, however, may be aided by documenting an audit trail that details “how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 252). Finally, with any type of qualitative research, aspects relative to a researcher’s positionality may skew the interpretations of the data (Lapadat et al., 2005). The validation steps outlined above can reduce evidence of bias and increase the reliability of the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Delimitations of this study include the use of a specific instructional model with one group of teachers in a social studies context. Although I work with teachers who instruct grades 6 through 12, I deliberately focused on ninth-grade due to teachers’ previous introduction to this approach as well as the diversity of experience within that specific team of teachers. While I expected that teachers’ perceptions and practices might improve based on professional development related to the workshop model, I also realized that some initial hesitation or levels of discomfort due to an unfamiliar form of instruction might exist (Felder & Brent, 1996).

**Concepts and Definitions**

The following definitions are used for the purpose of this study:
**Disciplinary literacy** is the ability to “create and critique knowledge” in a given discipline by using the reading, writing, speaking, listening, and/or research skills that are most prevalent in that discipline (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2017, p. 19).

**Inquiry** is an investigation of content or concepts framed by questions, sources, and related tasks (Grant et al., 2017).

**Social studies** is an academic field comprised of the disciplines of history, geography, civics, economics, and the behavioral sciences (NCSS, 2013).

**Workshop model** is an instructional framework that is intended to maximize student engagement through the use of student-centered work time, one-on-one conferences, and ongoing assessment/feedback (Tovani, 2011, 2017).

**Summary and Organization of the Study**

Chapter 1 introduced the problem of practice and provided an overview of the study. A rationale for a qualitative case study design, using an action research framework, was presented. Chapter 2 traces the evolution of the workshop model as a structure that supports inquiry-based learning and disciplinary literacy, including implications for teacher practice based on professional development in these areas. Each topic is explored generally and within a social studies context. Chapter 3 includes a description of the research design, including how a qualitative case study approach was implemented with a subset of social studies teachers within my school district. Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the data related to the research question and problem of practice identified in this chapter. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation with a summary of the findings and a discussion of the implications for my own setting and possibly elsewhere.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

In recent years, social studies educators have been challenged to revamp their courses to reflect an inquiry-based approach to the subject (NCSS, 2013). In that regard, teachers are asked to rethink their own instructional practices so that students are empowered to ask questions, conduct investigations, and ultimately draw conclusions based on their findings. Ideally, students should be able to replicate such problem-solving endeavors outside of the classroom as they take informed action based on personal areas of interest (Middleton, 2016). Inquiry-based learning is dependent upon students’ development of disciplinary literacy: the reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills that experts in the field use as they engage in their own inquiries (Swan, Lee, & Grant, 2018a). As the social studies instructional leader for a suburban school district in New England, I am tasked with helping teachers facilitate these same shifts in their daily practice.

The purpose of this study is to examine how a workshop model of instruction can equip ninth-grade social studies teachers in my district with the tools to support inquiry-based learning following job-embedded professional development related to that topic. Research indicates that teachers improve in planning inquiry-based experiences when they are provided with structured opportunities to do so (Mueller, 2018). Since teachers who were trained with teacher-centered instructional approaches are less likely to
embrace student-centered practices (D’Amico, 2016), the purpose of job-embedded professional development is to enhance day-to-day practices with the intent of improving student learning (Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, Powers, & Killion, 2010). In that regard, teachers can experiment with new techniques, reflect upon the effectiveness of those techniques, and collaborate with their colleagues as they refine their work. To that end, this study considers how participants’ perceptions and practices related to a workshop model change as a result of these professional development experiences.

Teachers’ considerations of their instructional approaches are more applicable now than ever before. Since the publication of the Common Core State Standards, all teachers—not just teachers of English language arts—are responsible for teaching students how to effectively access information and communicate. Social studies-specific frameworks in individual states (e.g., Connecticut State Department of Education, 2015) guide teachers with such expectations for students in different grade bands. Teachers who plan instruction with these elements in mind position students for college and career readiness as well as active participation in civic life (NCSS, 2013).

Research over the past several decades reveals that our students are not well prepared for colleges, careers, or civic life. The landmark report, A Nation at Risk, found that public schools were failing to produce a literate population, citing declining standardized test scores, poor postsecondary performance, and inadequate teacher training efforts (Gardner, 1983). Eighteen years later, with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, schools were told that they were not meeting the needs of all students, particularly those who were learning disabled, economically disadvantaged, or non-native speakers of English. Consequently, states were tasked with setting
achievement objectives for each of those subgroups and demonstrating, through standardized assessments, that students had made adequate yearly progress (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001). Student performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which comprises the findings presented within the Nation’s Report Card, indicates that students have maintained steady reading performance with no significant improvements since the passage of No Child Left Behind (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015, 2017). More concerning is that a racial achievement gap persists, particularly in that black and Hispanic students underperform when compared to their white counterparts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015, 2017).

Both internal and standardized assessment data for the district targeted within this study are consistent with national performance trends. Students fail to make district-identified targets on local reading and writing assessments and perform below the state average on both the critical reading and mathematics areas of the SAT. Students’ SAT cross-test scores for Analysis in History/Social Studies, which are based on questions that target discipline-specific texts and skills (The College Board, 2018), remain below the median score level for students who take that test nationwide.

Hattie (2003) asserted, “excellence in teaching is the single most powerful influence on achievement” (p. 4). Effective teachers must do more than simply plan and deliver lessons, though. Less than stellar performance gains and a concerning achievement gap will continue until teachers’ instructional decisions reflect their students’ needs, enabling those students to have a voice in their learning. When teachers differentiate their instruction for the content students learn, how students learn it, and the products students create to showcase their work, they demonstrate respect for students as
unique learners (Tomlinson, 2017). Moreover, when teachers consider students’ cultural backgrounds and actively involve them in deciding what they learn in class, students may feel more willing to take risks as part of a classroom community (Boutte, 2016). In fact, Boutte affirmed that teachers who incorporate culturally relevant practices not only instill an expectation of excellence in their students, they also allow students to consider and act upon inequities within their own communities and society-at-large. Teachers’ willingness to embrace students’ learning differences, and responsiveness in planning based on those differences, clearly need our attention.

With the above-referenced problem in mind, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do teachers’ perceptions related to the workshop model used within social studies classrooms change over time?

2. How do teachers’ practices related to the workshop model used within social studies classrooms change over time?

3. How do teachers’ perceptions of disciplinary literacy and the workshop model influence their classroom practices?

The remainder of this chapter includes a literature review that reflects the research questions under consideration in this study. First, a brief purpose of literature reviews is provided along with a description of how this review was compiled. Next, the key ideas and history of constructivism are presented as the organizing framework for this study. A description of how inquiry and disciplinary literacy instruction reflect constructivism are presented, followed by an analysis of how the workshop model supports those approaches. The chapter concludes with an examination of factors that influence
teachers’ perceptions and practices, including the impact of job-embedded professional development on those factors.

**Purpose of the Literature Review**

Literature reviews are essential in identifying current knowledge related to a topic, sometimes to justify a problem or support a need for original research (Machi & McEvoy, 2016). Action research studies, with their practitioner-oriented areas of focus, require that researchers be familiar with the current literature on their topics to understand how it relates to their own professional contexts (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Machi and McEvoy likened searching and organizing the literature to “assembling a well-used jigsaw puzzle” (p. 62). It is vital that researchers identify specific research questions and then locate credible sources—including print sources and peer-reviewed articles—that provide evidence in support of those questions (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Machi & McEvoy, 2016).

This literature review incorporates a variety of sources, including print publications sponsored by professional associations (e.g., ASCD, NCSS), peer-reviewed journal articles (research and theoretical), seminal primary sources, and statistical reports. Many of the articles included within the study were accessed via the databases available through the University of South Carolina library, including ERIC, EBSCO, Google Scholar, and JSTOR. Searches with keywords related to the research questions (e.g., workshop model, disciplinary literacy, job-embedded professional development, teacher perceptions, teacher practices) were used to locate initial sources. Reference lists that accompanied works cited within this study were also helpful in finding credible sources that supported the research topic. The sources selected support the use of a workshop...
model to advance inquiry-based instruction in social studies, as well as the potential impact meaningful professional development can have on teachers’ perceptions and practices. The study, itself, unifies these individual components into an intervention that is supported by the literature regarding these topics.

**Theoretical Framework: Constructivism**

The following section includes an overview of the critical ideas of constructivism as well as a chronology of the historical perspectives that contributed to the development of that theory.

**Key ideas.** Constructivism is a theory of teaching and learning in which students “[make] meaning by doing” (Harasim, 2012, p. 14). Constructivists believe that learning is an active mental activity in which students’ mental models are shaped by their own experiences and interactions with the environment (Ertmer & Newby, 2013; Nagowah & Nagowah, 2009). Constructivism differs from other theories, such as cognitivism, in that it rejects the premise that humans are computers that can be programmed to respond to situations in a uniform manner (Harasim, 2012). Instead, constructivists view the mind as “the source of all meaning” (Ertmer & Newby, 2013, p. 55). Since there is no finite set of knowledge, there are no “correct” meanings to be determined. The focus of constructivism, then, is interpretation. Learning must be set within authentic, real-world contexts to facilitate transfer to other contexts (Ertmer & Newby, 2013).

In a constructivist classroom, the role of the learner is to interpret information and construct one’s own meaning and perspectives (Mergel, 1998). The learner makes sense of his or her world based on preexisting knowledge, new experiences, and reflections upon those experiences (Harasim, 2012). As such, the student is highly and actively involved in the learning process, particularly by interacting socially with others and
examining multiple sources of data to consolidate knowledge (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). Ideally, students can demonstrate the transfer of those same skills when confronted with new problems or situations (Ertmer & Newby, 2013).

Constructivists see the teacher as a facilitator who helps learners make meaning and draw logical conclusions (Harasim, 2012). The instructor sets objectives based on processes, rather than content, and models use of those processes in authentic contexts (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). For this purpose, the instructor should structure active learning experiences (e.g., cooperative learning, group problem solving; Nagowah & Nagowah, 2009). Constructivist teachers should intend to provide students opportunities to think like experts in the disciplines under study (Ertmer & Newby, 2013).

Critics of constructivism state that it only focuses on divergent thinking, which can become problematic when convergent thinking is necessary (e.g., filing one’s income tax return; Mergel, 1998). Furthermore, critics argue that the open-ended nature of a constructivist classroom can create a disconnect with the realities of school district and standardized assessment practices (Nagowah & Nagowah, 2009). Yet, constructivism is an effective approach when trying to promote problem-solving skills, particularly for later application to real-life situations (Mergel, 1998). It is also useful when attempting to foster students’ self-selection of relevant sources of information and monitoring strategies (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). The argument for constructivism has improved with the advancement of the Internet, which now offers the ability to create case-based problems and provides opportunities for digital collaboration—even outside the classroom walls (Ertmer & Newby, 2013).


**Historical perspectives.** Although constructivists reject the “mind as computer” analogy, the theory is heavily rooted in the field of cognitive psychology. Early 20th-century cognitive psychologists proposed ways that individuals categorize and retrieve information, ultimately producing various forms of schema theory (Iran-Nejad & Winsler, 2000). Schema theory, according to Iran-Nejad and Winsler, is actually a broad term that incorporates various perspectives related to how learners process new data. Bartlett (1932) contributed to its development by examining how individuals create rather than store or retrieve knowledge. In that process, he argued that the mind was actually not the mental warehouse that the cognitivists described. He stated that our memory is:

> an imaginative reconstruction or construction, built out of . . . past reactions or experience. . . . It is, thus, hardly ever really exact, even in the most rudimentary cases of rote recapitulation, and it is not at all important that it should be so.

(Bartlett, 1932, p. 213)

While other theorists at the time conceptualized knowledge as a fixed set of information that learners acquire, Bartlett considered knowledge to be something that is internalized based on an individual’s cognitive, psychological, and physiological experiences (Iran-Nejad & Winsler, 2000). With this mindset, multiple people who experience the same event will acquire different memories of that event dependent upon the aforementioned factors.

Piaget approached schema from a developmental perspective and was the first psychologist to study how children learned compared to adults (Nichols, 2017). Like Bartlett (1932), Piaget (1936/1952) found that one’s construction of knowledge is the product of past experiences and biological factors. Piaget’s work extended Bartlett’s
thinking in examining the changing ways that learners process information as they mature. Piaget proposed four stages of cognitive development in which individuals learn how to use logic, reason, and consider abstract concepts (Piaget, 1936/1952, 1964). In the first three stages, children acquire sensory-motor abilities, language patterns, and basic reasoning skills (Piaget, 1964). In the fourth stage, which begins around the onset of adolescence, Piaget (1964) added that individuals learn how to express and test their own hypotheses. Nichols (2017) asserted that Piaget’s work has tasked teachers with designing increasingly complex and open-ended learning experiences beginning in early childhood classrooms.

Dewey is perhaps best known as the pioneer of constructivism, particularly as it applies to educational settings. In *My Pedagogic Creed*, Dewey (1897/2017) stated that an education is the product of both an individual’s experiences as well as the values of the culture in which one lives. He further argued in *Democracy and Education* that schools should intend to model society’s most desirable characteristics, otherwise even “the most civilized group will relapse into barbarism and then into savagery” (Dewey, 1916/2009, p. 9). As microcosms of a larger society, schools must design meaningful experiences to create responsible, modern-thinking citizens.

Dewey (1938) viewed teachers as the primary facilitators of learning; however, he also recognized that their primary responsibilities were to provide students with the proper context to safely develop their own ideas through carefully chosen experiences (Dewey, 1897/2017). As such, he argued that the prime instructional situation was one in which students were confronted with problems or scenarios that applied to their everyday lives, irrespective of the confines of traditional academic subjects (Dewey, 1916/2009;

Bruner (1960, 1965/2017) contributed to constructivist thinking with his idea of a spiral curriculum that allowed students to build knowledge from basic to complex concepts. He argued that teachers must lead students on a path of intuitive thinking that accounts for learners’ own interests and developmental levels. Similar to Dewey (1916/2009), Bruner believed that education was the path to fulfilling democratic principles. By structuring learning so that students increasingly build their independent thinking skills, teachers can prepare students to use those same skills outside of the classroom. Bruner (1960) advised: “One thing seems clear: if all students are helped to the full utilization of their intellectual powers, we will have a better chance of surviving as a democracy in an age of enormous technological and social complexity” (p. 10). The role of the teacher is twofold: (1) scaffold instruction to maximize engagement, and (2) equip students with the tools to be active and contributing members of society.

Finally, Vygotsky’s (1978) contributions to the constructivist perspective concern implications relative to individuals’ social development. In contrast to Piaget (1936/1952), who stated that cognitive development followed a linear approach, Vygotsky argued that it was the product of social interactions and cultural factors. According to Vygotsky, teachers must be able to identify children’s zones of proximal
development or their levels of independent problem solving compared to their potential levels of problem-solving when working with the teacher or other peers. Consequently, learning should be a joint venture between teachers and students. While the teacher learns about his or her students, the students socially and cognitively develop based on their interactions with the instructor and their peers. Clarà (2017) stated that such classrooms include students and teachers working together to create knowledge. Learning is an active process for both parties.

Collectively, the preceding sources provide a strong rationale for student-centered learning. As both a cognitive and social framework, constructivism positions learners to create new knowledge based on their own experiences and interactions with others. This perspective is consistent with the objectives of the workshop model that guides the classroom intervention conducted within this study. Proponents of a constructivist teaching approach state that it can prepare students for active participation in a democratic society, which aligns with the civic-oriented goals of social studies education and inquiry-based learning.

**Inquiry-Based Learning to Support Constructivism in Social Studies**

The field of social studies has always been regarded as necessary in American education, but it has not consistently been recognized as its own distinct discipline. The Committee of Ten, the first comprehensive task force commissioned by the National Education Association to propose a standardized school curriculum, recommended that schools include regular instruction in history, geography, and civics (National Education Association, 1894). The term “social studies” was first used in 1916 when the Committee on Social Studies was established to articulate the scope and purpose of the subject area.
The committee defined the social studies as “those whose subject matter relates directly to the organization and development of human society, and to man as a member of social groups,” with its “constant purpose [to be] the cultivation of good citizenship” (Dunn, 1916, p. 9). This definition has hardly changed over the past century. According to the NCSS website, social studies still integrates the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence (NCSS, 2018). Furthermore, NCSS states “the primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.” In its College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework, NCSS (2013) identified inquiry-based learning as the primary approach to fulfill the purpose and objectives of social studies education.

Inquiry-based learning in social studies can take many forms (Bolinger & Warren, 2007; Friesen & Scott, 2013). Consequently, educators may feel uneasy about using inquiry practices due to competing beliefs about pedagogical techniques. In a review of the literature defining social studies education, Saxe (1992) referred to the discipline as a “field plagued by a lack of identity” (p. 259) due to conflicting accounts of the origins and purposes of social studies education. Moreover, as new teachers prepare to teach social studies, their own approaches reflect the interpretations promoted within their methods courses and textbooks. Saxe found three primary origin themes identified in such sources: (1) the past and future of social studies are both uncertain, so it is up to each teacher to define and implement the field in his or her own way; (2) social studies was “invented” in 1916, and its instruction should reflect the findings of the Committee on the Social Studies; and (3) social studies is rooted in the study of history, and so it
should have a historical emphasis. None of these definitions specifically account for student-directed learning, inquiry, or even literacy, thus, contributing to an “identity crisis” for new and experienced teachers alike.

In a qualitative case study with one early-career teacher participant, Hartzler-Miller (2001) exemplified Saxe’s (1992) point that social studies teachers may not have a clear conception of their roles or purposes in the classroom. At the time of the study, Hartzler-Miller stated that the field of history was beginning to shift to a question-based (rather than authoritative) discipline, using topics that were not necessarily political or military-based in nature. Throughout two units, Hartzler-Miller observed the teacher in class, conducted reflection-based interviews, and discussed students’ work samples with the participant. Overall, Hartzler-Miller found that the teacher’s own background and prior experiences shaped how he viewed the study of history as a discipline. Furthermore, the participant’s own subject knowledge and perspectives on teaching history influenced his instructional decisions. Elements of inquiry-based practice were not necessarily consistent with the teacher’s stated beliefs, despite his statement that he supported “best practices” in instruction. Like Saxe, Hartzler-Miller recommended that explicit models of best practices, along with rationales for using such models, might be helpful when teachers lack the knowledge or beliefs that allow them to adopt those approaches on their own.

Furthermore, the specific techniques social studies teachers use when they implement inquiry-based learning may vary depending on their own philosophies of education. In a non-experimental study, Brugar and Whitlock (2018) conducted a descriptive and inferential analysis of the “essential social studies skills and strategies”
identified by the National Council of the Social Studies. Although elements of citizenship and inquiry are identified within the 119 skills, questions regarding implementation arise. Is the intent of social studies to transmit elements of effective citizenship or to transform students into agents of social change? Should teachers use a generic inquiry approach or one that is rooted in disciplinary skills? After coding each skill to common social studies approaches (e.g., transmission, decision-making, personal development) and then analyzing the correlations, Brugar and Whitlock identified statistically significant relationships between the skills, citizenship transmission, and personal development. In some cases, social studies skills included literacy strategies that were not discipline-specific and were reflective of more generic language arts standards. Although the researchers recommended that the NCSS take a more pointed stance toward its intent of incorporating each skill into social studies classrooms, they acknowledged that many decisions do happen at the classroom level. Teachers must be aware of their own perceptions about social studies and understand how their own views might guide their instructional decision-making.

Recent scholarship in social studies supports a decision-making model through which students use inquiry as a vehicle to articulate original conclusions and possibly use that new knowledge to take informed action outside of the classroom (Grant et al., 2017; Swan et al., 2018a). Swan et al. (2018a) noted the argumentative structure of such inquiries in that students are tasked with considering varying viewpoints, evaluating evidence that includes a range of perspectives and biases, and then consolidating their personal beliefs with the information found in teacher-provided or student-researched sources. Naturally, educators might worry about the time commitment to facilitating this
process in the classroom. Swan, Lee, and Grant (2018b) posited that teachers can weave questions, tasks, and sources into any lesson, making daily inquiry in social studies possible. Social studies teachers must take a stance that students will uncover content through investigation—not cover content for the sake of memorizing it.

Spires, Hervey, Morris, and Stelpflug (2012) illustrated the generative process of inquiry in a middle school social studies class through a pilot project in which students created five-minute videos to showcase research that they conducted. In that process, the students developed compelling research questions; gathered images, video clips, and print texts to support analysis of those questions; engaged in online and face-to-face discussions with their peers; synthesized their evidence into arguments; revised the work based on self-, peer-, and expert-evaluation; and ultimately published and shared their work using Internet-based technology. Not only were students able to answer their initial questions, but they were also “emboldened to act with a sense of civic duty” (p. 488) by issuing calls to action regarding topics of personal importance. Spires et al. reinforced Minigan, Westbrook, Rothstein, and Santana’s (2017) assertion that clear and purposeful scaffolding is fundamental to the success of inquiry. Students cannot be “let free” to produce the work. Mini-lessons, direct instruction, and frequent reflection opportunities prepare students for success for questioning in the classroom as well as within a democracy.

Ultimately, an inquiry-based approach can allow students to view social studies from a critical perspective. Crowley and King (2018) posited that an emphasis on social justice issues, including opportunities within an inquiry for students to reflect upon their own statuses of privilege or oppression, can enable students to enact transformative
change within their own contexts. In this process, as Freire (1970/2017) first proposed, teachers and students work together to identify critical issues, develop shared understandings, and determine possible action steps. In a qualitative study with 10 Latino immigrant students, Callahan and Obenchain (2012) explored how those students’ social studies classes prepared them for political and civic participation. Students’ responses to interview questions were coded and then organized thematically using grounded theory methods. Overall, Crowley and King found that students who felt most empowered were encouraged by their teachers to critically think about their own social situations, conduct original research, and communicate their thinking—all characteristics of inquiry-based learning. To that end, the researchers recommended that social studies teachers consider the extent to which they allow students to pursue justice-oriented issues. Since, as Crowley and King asserted, “the political and civic health of the nation rests on the active engagement of the populace” (p. 30), teachers should regularly consider how social justice fits within their inquiry processes.

**Disciplinary Literacy as a Tool to Support Inquiry-Based Learning**

In a 2016 position statement, the NCSS asserted that if social studies teachers wished to prepare students for a technologically advancing society, it was critical that reading, research, and communication skills be embedded within social studies instruction, not merely added into existing lessons (NCSS, 2016). Yet, despite an awareness that such practices are essential, many social studies teachers have traditionally associated literacy “instruction” with reading the prescribed textbook and learning course content through that reading (Nokes, 2008; Nokes, Dole, & Hacker, 2007). According to Nokes (2008), social studies topics are ideal for implementing
research-supported literacy instruction. The plethora of content-related expository texts, primary source documents, secondary source interpretations, and even historical fiction all require discrete analysis skills that social studies educators are well-equipped to teach due to their own expertise in reading such texts (Nokes, 2008; VanSledright & Maggioni, 2016; Wineburg, 1991). Since an expectation with the Common Core State Standards is that students in school read informational-type texts at least 70% of the time by the time they reach grade 12 (McKnight, 2014), literacy instruction in social studies must be a priority for teachers and administrators alike.

Moje (2008) supported NCSS’s stance toward literacy instruction, positing that it can be used as a vehicle to “help youth gain access to the accepted knowledge of the disciplines, thereby allowing them to also critique and change that knowledge” (p. 97). Discourse within the disciplines—and in society, in general—rests on the ability to defend ideas gleaned from texts (Lent, 2016; Moje, 2008; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Since practitioners within each subject area value skills that necessitate the ability to craft content-specific arguments, shifting instruction to focus on disciplinary literacy can position young learners to emulate the reasoning and communication skills of experts in the field. According to Wineburg (1998), many of the skills that historians use in their own work (e.g., determining the origins of sources, contextualizing evidence, corroborating texts, evaluating arguments) are the same ones that students should learn in social studies classes. Lent (2016) added, “disciplinary literacy is not the application of strategies to the disciplines; it is a way of learning that drills deeply into the very essence of what it means to come to know content” (p. 6).
In the case of social studies, disciplinary literacy and inquiry are interdependent processes (Moje, 2015; Ravi, 2010; Wineburg & Martin, 2004). According to Ravi, historians do not simply read texts to gain information; they read with questions in mind and often need to piece together elements from several sources to generate credible conclusions. Although reading skills are at the heart of such work, writing instruction must also be emphasized to ensure that students learn how to make proper evidence-based assertions (Monte-Sano, 2010; Wineburg & Martin, 2004).

Fisher and Frey (2015) advised teachers to select texts that exemplify the same tasks students will complete after reading them. For example, if students are expected to apply a specific disciplinary literacy skill, or write an evidence-based argument, the teacher should find strong models that appropriately demonstrate those same skills as applied by disciplinary experts. Often termed “mentor texts,” these sources are ones that ultimately guide students in making effective content and structural choices in their own writing (Fisher & Frey, 2013; Pytash & Morgan, 2014). Text selection does not need to be a teacher-directed endeavor, though. Allowing students to self-select texts that reinforce skills targeted in whole-class instruction can produce higher levels of student engagement (Morgan & Wagner, 2013) and culminate in a “living curriculum” for the course from which learners help one another understand complex issues from multiple viewpoints (Wolk, 2011, p. 666).

Development of students’ disciplinary skills must be strategic and reflective of one’s students (Spires, Kerkhoff, & Graham, 2016). In a qualitative and ethnographic case study, Girard and Harris (2012) investigated how a high school world history teacher attempted to design instruction to support advanced students’ reading and writing skills in
her course. More specifically, the researchers focused on how the use of a teacher-developed tool allowed the students to consider historical problems, record evidence from their readings, and generate written responses at the end of the unit. Data collected included video and audio recordings, field notes, student work samples, assignments, a formal interview with the teacher, and semi-structured interviews with students. Overall, Girard and Harris found the tool to be of mixed helpfulness since it was not adequately scaffolded to address students’ needs related to argument development. The teacher erroneously associated students’ prior exposure to the tool, and overall success in school, with the need for less direct instruction. Consequently, Girard and Harris emphasized the importance of regular and explicit teacher modeling, even after students might be familiar with general literacy practices. Regular assessment throughout this process, as well as teachers’ flexibility in adapting their instructional approaches when students require support in attaining new skills, are essential (Spires et al., 2016).

Research supports that when teachers do consider their students’ academic needs and plan instruction accordingly, students’ development of disciplinary literacy skills will increase (Monte-Sano et al., 2014; Reisman, 2012). For example, Monte-Sano et al. argued that students who struggle with literacy will likely be frustrated and overwhelmed when asked to approach complex historical tasks and texts independently. Accordingly, they recommended that teachers consider vocabulary choices, question phrasing, and even document length when making instructional decisions. De La Paz et al. (2014) investigated in a mixed-methods study the extent to which students of varying reading levels ultimately benefited from specific instruction related to disciplinary literacy. Using a random selection of 310 eighth-grade students derived from classrooms in a large
school district, the researchers compared pre- and post-test results following a year-long instructional intervention in which students learned academically and developmentally appropriate ways of reading, annotating, and commenting on historical sources. Written work samples were evaluated based on argument development, writing quality, and length. Statistical analyses revealed that students in the intervention group outperformed the control group concerning argumentation and essay length, reflecting the power of targeted intervention on the independent application of disciplinary literacy skills. De La Paz et al. concluded that assigning writing does not promote disciplinary thinking, but tailoring instruction to support source analysis, questioning, and argumentation moves closer toward that goal.

Ultimately, teachers’ knowledge of students’ cultural backgrounds and perceived biases must also inform how they approach disciplinary literacy in their classes. Damico, Baildon, Exter, and Guo (2009) exemplified the importance of teachers considering students’ own perspectives in a qualitative study with students in four ninth-grade social studies classes. Students were tasked with interpreting and analyzing content on various websites related to the relationship between Taiwan and China. Throughout one instructional unit, the teacher selected webpages that presented different points of view and asked students to answer guided reading questions relative to four lenses (i.e., descriptive, academic, critical, and reflexive). The researchers found that most students were able to demonstrate basic disciplinary literacy skills (e.g., identify why claims or evidence from two texts were or were not convincing); however, personal and contextual factors affected their abilities to evaluate the websites effectively. To that end, students’ own opinions, values, living conditions, and backgrounds all influenced their overall
responses. Consequently, Damico et al. recommended that social studies educators explicitly model related skills, including evaluating bias or determining credibility, when asking students to look at texts. Extant research indicates that even historians approach reading historical works from different angles (Wineburg, 1998), further supporting the need to teach students how their own personal contexts can affect their interpretations.

**Workshop Model to Support Disciplinary Literacy and Inquiry in Social Studies**

The workshop model is a classroom structure that empowers students to do the majority of the reading, writing, and thinking in a class (Tovani, 2011). Historically, workshops were settings in which novices to a trade learned discipline-specific skills from more experienced craftsmen. Workshops in educational settings are based on that same premise. Graves (1983) first articulated the power of a workshop model in his landmark text, *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work*, in which he shared effective instructional practices identified from his research with the National Institute of Education. Overwhelmingly, he found that students who learned in environments that provided structure, choice, and a community of shared discourse between teachers and students were most willing to take intellectual risks, engage in the craft of the subject under study, and collaborate as they revised and refined their thinking. Graves (1978) proclaimed “people want to write” (p. 4); however, he also observed that the static and inflexible curricula pervasive in schools did not promote students’ natural interests in expressing themselves. As Graves’ colleague at the University of New Hampshire, Donald Murray (1982) noted, a shift in teaching from telling students information to listening and responding to their needs requires a new mindset in how teachers prepare for class, pace their lessons, interact with students, and even organize the physical environment.
Atwell (1987) is perhaps best associated with the secondary-level application of the workshop model, particularly in how she strategically weaved both reading and writing instruction into her language arts classroom. Although brief whole-class mini-lessons anchored students in possible craft choices or genres, the majority of each class was structured to provide students with the opportunity to apply skills using self-selected texts or writing assignments, confer with the teacher, and determine how they would meet the learning goals. Assessment, then, was more than a grade on a paper; it was a continual practice shaped by the teacher’s individual conversations with students and whole-class observations. Atwell likened the role of the teacher to an inquirer who continually asks questions and learns from observation, remarking “we no longer feel drained by the demands we impose on ourselves when we view our classrooms as contexts which we motivate, orchestrate, and evaluate” (Atwell, 1982, p. 86). Atwell’s teacher-researcher work has largely inspired other educators to investigate their own practices from an insider perspective and then share their findings with the broader professional community (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

Initially a research assistant with Graves, Calkins (1994) formulated a specific workshop structure that was first based on writing instruction and later expanded to other disciplines. Fundamental to her model is the idea that the teacher exists within a community of learners. Consistent with constructivist thinking (e.g., Piaget, 1936/1952), Calkins proposed that the teacher situates himself or herself as a fellow scholar who makes sense of the discipline by modeling, thinking aloud, and—most importantly—conferring with students. Calkins (2010) stated that the structure of the workshop remains “simple and predictable” since “it is the work itself that is ever-changing and complex”
Consequently, most educators who use workshops incorporate consistent elements, regardless of the content area: a brief mini-lesson in which the teacher demonstrates a new skill or strategy, or even shares new background knowledge; independent work time for students, during which the teacher confers with individuals or small groups regarding the task at hand; brief whole-class check-ins, when appropriate; and, to close the lesson, time for teachers and students to share examples of new learning (Calkins, 2010). Tovani (2011, 2017) encouraged teachers to build time into the beginning of the workshop to share learning targets and possible assessment data, so students know the intended outcomes from the outset of the lesson.

Although the workshop model was conceived to support reading and writing instruction in language arts classrooms, it certainly has applicability in supporting both disciplinary literacy and inquiry-based learning in social studies (e.g., Boguszewski, 2017; Daniels, 2014). In That Workshop Book, Bennett (2007) shared content-specific lessons that incorporate its use. She stated, regardless of the content area, workshops offer the same advantages: they provide teachers and students with a predictable structure that provides dedicated time to student-directed learning; they create a routine that remains unchanged from day to day; they reflect a system in which all elements exist together to form a coherent lesson; and they culminate in a ritual that includes “a spirit of sacred celebration to it—a celebration of student thinking” (p. 14).

Bennett (2009) reflected upon her own in-person observation of Tovani’s implementation of a workshop model to highlight its effectiveness in an eighth-grade social studies class. In a two-day lesson, Tovani asked students to make predictions, read a text written by a historian to find evidence to support or refute those predictions, and
debrief their new learning with their classmates. Tovani spent less than one-third of the instructional time engaged in whole-class teaching, most of which was used to model how to interact with a source. Just as an inquiry-based approach allows students to practice the discourse and analysis skills needed to be active citizens (Crowley & King, 2018), the design of a workshop lesson enables students to “gain the courage and risk-taking habits of mind to become the reading, writing, and speaking-out kind of citizens we need to have to succeed in and lead our world” (Bennett, 2009, p. 176).

Lausé (2004) reflected on her development of a workshop-based curriculum in her 10th grade English class, stating it “has transformed our students and our school” (p. 24). She cited increased student engagement, improved stamina in reading, and better reading speed and comprehension. Research supports Lausé’s assertion that students who participate in workshops, particularly those considered “at risk” of not graduating, develop greater autonomy as learners and exhibit higher levels of engagement in that process (Gulla, 2012; Taylor & Nesheim, 2001). In an ethnographic study, Gulla described how she worked with 27 ninth-grade English students and their teacher to develop identities as readers of literature. Gulla’s description of Jennifer’s (the teacher’s) English class reflects the structure, routine, system, and ritual that Bennett (2007) highlighted as the benefits to the workshop approach: Students in the class had daily time to read independently, select the books that they read, confer with the teacher about the strategies they were using as they engaged in their independent reading, and participate in segments of whole-group instruction to gain knowledge of new skills. Consequently, Gulla noted the development of a classroom community that was characterized by a
commitment of students to learn new material and recognition by the students that the teacher cared about their success as independent learners.

Little research exists regarding the use of a workshop model in social studies classes, despite the fact that its student-centered purpose and emphasis on collaborative construction of meaning connect well to both the goals of inquiry-based learning (e.g., Grant et al., 2017) and disciplinary literacy in social studies (e.g., Monte-Sano et al., 2014). In a mixed-methods dissertation, Lubig (2006) proposed a workshop model that blends the tenets of writing workshops with NCSS’s standards for civic education. Lubig stated that the shared ownership of learning evident in the workshop model provides a vehicle for teachers to collaborate with students to develop civic competencies. Whole-class learning segments are devoted to content overviews and discussion of probing questions; independent work time allows students to explore those questions in greater depth; and, follow-up activities empower students to develop community-oriented projects that extend learning of in-class topics. Lubig’s (2006, 2009) workshop-based approach aligns with Swan et al.’s (2018b) position that social studies courses must be designed so students can ask questions, examine sources, and engage in tasks that mirror the work conducted by experts within the field.

Factors Influencing Social Studies Teachers’ Perceptions and Practices

Even though the benefits of inquiry-based learning, disciplinary literacy, and the workshop model are research-supported, a variety of elements may affect classroom implementation of those approaches. To that point, the following section includes factors that may influence teachers’ perceptions and the resulting consequences on their day-to-day classroom practices.
Naturally, teachers’ own philosophies of education will affect the manners in which they teach (Monte-Sano, 2008; Powell, 2018; Weintraub, 2000). In a multiple-case study with three social studies teachers, Brown and Hughes (2018) used semi-structured interviews and an analysis of classroom artifacts to examine how teachers’ own beliefs about the study of history were reflected within their classroom practices. The researchers found that despite continued efforts within teacher education to promote the intent of historiography, experienced teachers default to their own personal beliefs about teaching once they begin working with students in the classroom. As a result, their philosophies shape the extent to which they integrate primary sources into instruction, ask students to construct written arguments, and consider how point of view shapes the development of history. Brown and Hughes recommended that preservice programs establish more direct links between the purpose of social studies education and the strategies that teachers actually implement. This proposal supports Massey and Heafner’s (2004) earlier finding that social studies teachers often do not necessarily consider themselves literacy teachers, but that training focused on linking literacy research to classroom practice may help teachers recognize the importance of embedding those skills into instruction.

Site-specific factors may influence teachers’ ideas about incorporating discipline-specific skills in their classes (VanSledright & Maggioni, 2016). In a qualitative multiple-case study, Graham et al. (2017) examined how eight middle school social studies teachers perceived and enacted both general and discipline-specific literacy practices in their respective content areas. Using field notes based on classroom observations, semi-structured interviews following the observations, and a review of classroom artifacts, Graham et al. found that cross-curricular literacy practices were emphasized over a
disciplinary literacy approach due to the interdisciplinary organization of the school targeted within the study. Yet, those same teachers recognized that their distinct subject areas required specific literacy skills. Ultimately, teachers’ perceptions about the importance of embedding disciplinary literacy in their classes were influenced by local pressures, including end-of-course testing, which subsequently influenced their classroom practices. In an earlier qualitative study with eight high school social studies teachers, Nokes (2010) also found a disconnect between teachers’ perceived definitions of the study of history and the actual opportunities they provided students to think independently. Nokes suggested that local issues, including large class sizes or administrative-directed pressures to cover content, may incline teachers to default to passive-learning experiences. Like Brown and Hughes, Nokes recommended that teacher education and training are fundamental to help instill the value of teaching literacy despite the contextual demands that teachers may face.

Furthermore, teachers’ (and even students’) definitions of rigor influence their resulting classroom practices. Moje (2008, 2017) asserted that teachers typically do not establish student-centered courses in which the learners apply critical thinking simply because students do not expect that type of instruction from their teachers. Consequently, teachers assume that if students want teacher-centered, passive instruction, why disrupt the status quo? Gibbs (2017) suggested that teachers may not even associate “rigor” with the same types of outcomes, thus, compounding this issue further. In a qualitative study with five social studies teachers, Gibbs interviewed participants 4 times about their conceptions of rigor, collected classroom artifacts, and conducted between 15 and 25 classroom observations over a semester. Gibbs found that although all teachers associated
rigor with classroom community, intellectual engagement, and higher-order thinking, there was a clear divide in terms of how teachers understood and enacted it within their own classrooms. Teachers who defined rigor in an academic sense tended to emphasize content coverage and cultural literacy while those who defined it in more of a democratic sense associated it with a more problem-based curriculum. The result of this discrepancy is that students’ classroom experiences may be impeded by teachers who do not associate rigor with students’ abilities to pursue issues of personal importance. Since teachers’ instructional practices contribute to students’ readiness to participate as active and informed citizens (Gibbs, 2017; Moje, 2008; Saye and Social Studies Inquiry Research Collaborative, 2013), teachers must understand how their own definitions of rigor support that important outcome.

Finally, social studies teachers’ personal concepts of civic engagement affect their classroom practices. In a qualitative study, Milner (2014) considered how a middle school social studies teacher’s attempt to emphasize civic “purpose” with her students resulted in a classroom built upon cultural relevance. Milner used classroom and schoolwide observations, interviews, and artifact analysis to understand how Ms. Shaw, the teacher, framed her instruction around her own idea of the importance of activism. In that process, Ms. Shaw made a concerted effort to initially build relationships with both students and families to determine how course content could connect to their own lives and communities (see also Freire, 1970/2017). She selected powerful content choices that allowed students to transfer their learning to different contexts and asked students to consider what situations they encountered in their own lives that related to what they were studying. Ms. Shaw openly discussed race, including how it shapes identity, how
we can use that knowledge to inform the community, and how others have used that same knowledge to better the world. Milner reminded that teachers must understand that they are responsible for teaching more than just subject matter. Ladson-Billings (1995, 2009) added that teachers can develop such service-oriented mindsets when they examine the work of exemplary educators who use culturally relevant practices in their own settings.

The prior studies indicate that teachers’ perceptions clearly affect their day-to-day classroom practices. As such, teachers who perceive their roles as facilitative in nature, and who desire students to use content-specific skills beyond the classroom, ultimately use instructional practices that differ from more traditional approaches. The following section demonstrates how professional development can be used as a tool for transforming teachers’ beliefs as well as how they work with their students.

**Impact of Professional Development on Teachers’ Perceptions and Practices**

The passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; 2015) resulted in a revised federal definition of professional development for educators. According to the mandate, professional learning opportunities should allow teachers and other school personnel to develop content knowledge or pedagogical skills through sustained, collaborative, job-embedded, and data-driven activities. Although efforts to design meaningful professional development certainly existed before 2015, a significant factor contributing to students’ lack of skill development in content classrooms prior to that time was the ineffectiveness of the “one-shot” professional development sessions typically provided to introduce new strategies to teachers (Applebee & Langer, 2009). Alternatively, job-embedded professional development takes a different approach. In that process, teachers work individually or collaboratively to examine their regular classroom practices and then use their findings to improve their work (Croft et al., 2010). Croft et al.
stated that job-embedded professional development can take many forms, including action research, structured discussions, coaching, data analysis, and classroom observations, among other activities. Job-embedded professional development has the potential to improve teachers’ perceptions regarding new instructional approaches as well as the effectiveness in implementing new practices (Mette, Nieuwenhuizen, & Hvidston, 2016; Stewart & Houchens, 2014).

Maass and Engeln (2018) explored the benefits of a large-scale professional development effort that focused on sustained teacher training related to inquiry-based learning. Using a quantitative methodology, with pre- and post-surveys, the researchers analyzed the extent to which participants (50-100 teachers and 1500 students) adjusted their teaching approaches. Participants were tasked with watching content videos related to inquiry-based learning, collaborating with their peers to develop lessons, implementing those activities with students, reflecting on successes and challenges, and discussing implications for future work. Survey results indicated a significant increase in student-centeredness between the beginning and end of the study; however, teachers with existing knowledge related to that topic expressed that they experienced more difficulty growing in that area. A disparity in teachers’ responses may be a result of a lack of meaningful feedback provided to more experienced teachers, therefore, causing them to be more critical of their own practices in the absence of encouragement. For job-embedded professional development to reach its maximum effectiveness, facilitators should include regular opportunities to coach participants concerning their progress in meeting targeted skills (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2012; Snyder, Hemmeter, & Fox, 2015).
Regular, targeted, and sustained professional development can raise teachers’ awareness of the importance of embedding disciplinary literacy skills in instruction, ultimately promoting the increased application of student-centered strategies in the classroom (Colwell, 2016; Paik et al. 2011; Thacker & Friedman, 2017). Gilles et al. (2013) conducted a qualitative study with three social studies teachers in which the researchers investigated how professional development relative to teachers’ own reading strategies transferred to their classroom practices. Operating from the premise that content area teachers typically do not consider literacy instruction to be within the realm of their own responsibilities, the researchers asked teachers to read subject-specific texts themselves, annotate them, and then discuss how their own thinking might be used within classroom instruction. An analysis of field notes, student work samples, student and teacher interviews, and classroom observations (conducted both before and after the study) revealed that once teachers had a platform to regularly discuss their own literacy approaches, they also began to ask their students to use those same strategies. In fact, in most cases, teachers even began to create graphic organizers and other supports that allowed their emerging or struggling readers to build their confidence in using the same skills used by experts in the field. Gilles et al.’s resulting recommendation that literacy-based professional development “be done with content area teachers and not to content area teachers” (p. 42) echoes the spirit of ESSA (2015): for professional development to be meaningful, teachers must clearly see the connection between what they learn and how they can immediately apply it to their daily work with students.

Ideally, job-embedded professional development not only fosters a sense of collaboration among teacher-participants, but it also inspires them to consider new ways
to promote civic engagement within their courses (Parker, 2017; Reidel & Draper, 2011; Thomas, 2007). In a qualitative study conducted with 14 social studies and language arts teacher-participants who attended a series of Library of Congress workshops, Patterson et al. (2017) investigated how a collaborative process around the use of sources promoted literacy as inquiry within their classes. They paired social studies and language arts teachers to co-plan lessons based on Library of Congress sources. Teachers subsequently taught the lessons to their own students and then met again with their peers to reflect and receive feedback. Based on an analysis of lesson plans, curated source sets, and teacher interviews, Patterson et al. found that every lesson developed incorporated higher-level thinking with a focus on source-level analysis.

Furthermore, they found that collaboration resulted in the increased development of deep inquiry experiences, with the richest examples being when students used content-specific sources to develop civic literacy skills through evidence-based writing.

Ultimately, both the teachers and students experienced an authentic approach to literacy instruction that culminated in the opportunities for informed action that could naturally extend from inquiry experiences (NCSS, 2013). Patterson et al.’s work reinforces Croft et al.’s (2010) position that professional learning communities, particularly those in which teachers analyze their practices and experiment with new techniques, promote a form of “collective creativity” (p. 7) that is not possible when working in isolation.

Overall, the above-referenced studies indicate that job-embedded professional development can foster high degrees of teacher collaboration along with a greater willingness for teachers to implement new instructional techniques, including inquiry-based approaches, literacy instruction, and civic-oriented opportunities. When teachers
can experiment with these approaches in the safety of their own professional learning communities, the implications for their individual classroom practices are promising (Croft et al., 2010).

**Summary**

The present study considers the perceptions and practices of social studies teachers as they incorporate a literacy and inquiry-based workshop model in their ninth-grade classes. As such, this work is grounded in constructivist theory, with its emphasis on student-centered learning, development of new knowledge, and the interdependence of all members (students and teachers) within a classroom community (e.g., Dewey, 1938; Ertmer & Newby, 2013; Piaget, 1936/1952).

A workshop approach is rooted in research surrounding effective reading and writing instruction and gained popularity in the 1970s and 1980s when teacher-researchers, such as Atwell (1987), shared comprehensive overviews of their successes in empowering even the most reluctant learners to read and write based on topics of interest. Within secondary classes, workshop-structured lessons provide avenues for teachers to support culturally relevant instruction, and for students to participate in learning that extends beyond the school walls and possibly better their communities (Gulla, 2012; Lausé, 2004).

Although research supports teachers’ concurrent use of both literacy and inquiry practices to engage students in disciplinary learning (e.g., Ravi, 2010), content area teachers do not always recognize their roles in facilitating learning in this way (Gilles et al., 2013). Teachers’ educational philosophies (Curry & Cherner, 2016), conceptions of rigor (Gibbs, 2017; Moje, 2008, 2017), and attitudes toward the nature of their own content areas (Brown & Hughes, 2018; Milner, 2014) all influence their resulting
practices. Moreover, teachers’ own experiences as readers, learners, and communicators within a subject area are likely to influence their approaches to teaching (Wineburg, 1991).

The teacher-participants included within this study teach a common course within the same school district; therefore, a job-embedded professional development model was used as a means to plan and reflect upon the use of a workshop model in their classes. Since job-embedded professional development allows teachers to collaborate with their peers, experiment with new techniques, and reflect upon their successes and areas for improvement (Croft et al., 2010; Patterson et al., 2017), teachers’ participation in this process had the potential to result in transformative change in their individual classes.
Chapter 3

Research Design and Methods

Overview of Study

Social studies education was once a field primarily associated with the transmission of content that teachers or other authoritative bodies deemed relevant for active civic engagement (Dunn, 1916). Yet, as a student-centered approach to education became more prevalent in the 20th century (e.g., Dewey, 1938), educators began to consider ways that students could actively construct their own understandings of concepts in contrast to merely acquiring such knowledge from their teachers. Nearly a century later, national and state social studies standards are rooted in that same thinking. As such, teachers are now encouraged to provide students with opportunities to grapple with compelling questions, interact with a variety of texts, and draw independent conclusions based on the evidence they examine (NCSS, 2013). The role of the social studies teacher, then, has transformed into one that is to guide students in developing the tools of the inquiry process so they can conduct such investigations on their own. According to Shanahan and Shanahan (2017), when teachers equip students with the same strategies that content area experts use to read, write, and solve problems effectively, they build students’ disciplinary literacy skills and simultaneously address the demands of a standards-based curriculum.

Although literacy-focused instruction and inquiry-based learning are certainly not new approaches, many social studies teachers still hesitate in shifting to an entirely
student-driven curriculum (Brown & Hughes, 2018). Yet, in other disciplines, such as English language arts, those same components have long been embedded in routine instruction. Since the Common Core State Standards mandate that all content area teachers are also teachers of literacy (McKnight, 2014), I began to wonder if any of those same English language arts approaches might be valuable within a social studies context. One of them, commonly known as the workshop model, is based upon the notion that students will only learn to read, write, and think effectively when actually given significant amounts of time to practice those same skills in class following short periods of explicit teacher modeling (Tovani, 2011). Clearly, teachers cannot shift to such a student-centered approach overnight, though. Ongoing professional development and opportunities for teachers to reflect on their own perceptions and practices are critical to the potential success of new initiatives (Patterson et al., 2017).

As the person responsible for overseeing social studies curriculum and instruction in my school district, I sought to examine how my colleagues’ perceptions and practices related to the workshop model changed over time following job-embedded professional development associated with that instructional approach. Therefore, this study is of local significance to my own work since the findings will influence subsequent social studies curriculum development decisions in my district. It is designed around the following research questions:

1. How do teachers’ perceptions related to the workshop model used within social studies classrooms change over time?
2. How do teachers’ practices related to the workshop model used within social studies classrooms change over time?
3. How do teachers’ perceptions of disciplinary literacy and the workshop model influence their classroom practices?

The remainder of this chapter includes a specific overview of the methods used to design this study and analyze the data gathered during the research process. First, a description of the research design, intervention, and constructs are provided along with an overview of the setting for this study. Next, a detailed overview of the two participants is included. A description of the research measures, instruments, and tools are presented, followed by a detailed account of the research procedure. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the data analysis process.

**Research Design and Intervention**

The following section includes an overview of the research design for this study as well as a description of the research setting and role of the researcher.

**Overview of research design.** The present study is designed using an action research approach. According to Herr and Anderson (2015), action research is a type of formal analysis in which individuals examine problems of practice within their organizations, develop strategies to address those problems, and consider how the data gathered can address the identified problems of practice. Action research typically includes cycles in which the researcher and participants develop a research plan, collect, and analyze data, develop an action plan, and then reflect on the process as a whole (Mertler, 2017). To that end, action research is more personalized than traditional research in that it deals with affecting both personal and institutional change from within a setting (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Furthermore, action research fosters a spirit of shared inquiry as stakeholders collaborate to improve their own practices (Herr & Anderson, 2015). An action research approach is appropriate for this study since its findings can
have implications for participants’ daily work as well as my own role in supervising the secondary social studies program in my district. Overall, action research empowers participants and researchers to facilitate growth that is specific to their positions within the organization.

Since action research must include designs and methods consistent with formal research (Efron & Ravid, 2013), the identified problem of practice was investigated using a qualitative paradigm. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), qualitative researchers focus on “understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 6). In that regard, qualitative researchers collect various forms of data from participants (e.g., interviews, documents, observational data) and then analyze that information to develop a better understanding of the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Unlike quantitative research, which focuses on the use of deductive logic to test hypotheses, qualitative research allows researchers to analyze data using an inductive approach through which they determine the themes that emerge from the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that researchers conduct qualitative studies “because of a problem or issue that needs to be explored...[and] because we need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue” (p. 117). Furthermore, qualitative studies focus exclusively on participants’ stories, enabling them to share their own perspectives and even collaborate with the researcher in interpreting the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For these reasons, a qualitative approach aligns nicely with the action research perspective since equity of voice and participant-to-researcher collaboration are valued.
More specifically, a case study approach narrows the focus to one specific grade level at the research site. A case study is an investigation of a bounded system for the purpose of in-depth description or analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A bounded case is “a unit in which there are boundaries” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), whether those boundaries are determined by place or groupings of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ultimately, case studies allow for an in-depth understanding of that particular bounded system for purposes of interpretation. According to Yin (2018), case studies are particularly helpful when researchers attempt to answer how or why questions that “[trace] operational processes over time rather than mere frequencies or incidence” (p. 10). Moreover, according to Yin and Davis (as cited in Yin, 2018), case studies are appropriate when a researcher seeks “to understand a real-world case and assume that such understanding is likely to involve contextual conditions pertinent to [the] case” (p. 15). Since the current study focused on examining how one specific group of teachers’ perceptions and practices changed over time within their natural work settings, a case study was a logical approach for that work.

**Description of intervention, constructs, and research constructs.** The primary intervention for this study involved teachers’ participation in ongoing job-embedded professional development focused on lesson planning, classroom teaching, and assessment practices used within the workshop model. According to Croft et al. (2010), job-embedded professional development differs from traditional professional development where teachers learn new strategies but then are left to incorporate them on their own without any further support. Instead, job-embedded professional development may include facilitated discussions, coaching, lesson development, and analysis of
student work to improve the individual and collective practice of all participants (Croft et al., 2010). Since the participants in this study taught a common course, they met with the researcher (their instructional leader) every week to engage in these professional learning activities.

Weekly sessions focused primarily on teachers’ use of a workshop model within their classes. Generally, a workshop model is a class structure that allows for a student-centered approach to learning. More specifically, workshops include specific components that remain unchanged from day to day: an opening segment in which the teacher shares learning targets that are based on students’ performance in the preceding lesson, a mini-lesson in which the teacher delivers new content or models a skill, a large segment of student work time through which students engage in the task modeled in the mini-lesson, and a debriefing component through which students have the opportunity to consolidate their learning (Tovani, 2011). Bennett (2007) stated that all of these components must exist for a workshop to function most effectively. Moreover, Tovani (2011, 2017) posited that teachers must use various assessment methods throughout the lesson to determine if additional whole-class, small-group, or individual instruction is necessary. The student-centered nature of the workshop model supports the inquiry-based approach included within social studies standards and allows students the time to practice using the disciplinary literacy skills that are needed to think like a historian.

Data collected throughout the study focused on examining teachers’ perceptions and practices related to using a workshop model following job-embedded professional development focused on that approach. Teachers’ perceptions include their attitudes, beliefs, and philosophies specific to their work (Brown & Hughes, 2018). Teachers’
practices include their classroom delivery of lessons, interactions with students, and materials they produce that are actually used to facilitate instruction (Nokes, 2008). Data collected throughout the study allowed the researcher and teachers to consider the extent to which job-embedded professional development affected their perceptions, practices, or even the interplay between those two constructs.

Figure 3.1 Relationship between intervention and research constructs

Research setting. The research site is a suburban public high school located in New England. Shoreline High School (pseudonym) was founded in 1936 and moved to a state-of-the-art facility in 1997. Teachers and students all have access to their own computers, and most classrooms are fitted with projection technology. The school currently serves approximately 900 students in grades 9 through 12. The school employs 83 certified staff members, including 3 building administrators (a principal, assistant principal, and dean of students). Four academic instructional leaders also oversee the core subject areas (i.e., English language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science) for
grades 6 through 12 and are part of the leadership team for both the middle and high schools. Demographically, the school has become much more diverse within the last 10 years. For example, according to the school’s 2006-2007 Strategic School Profile, 15.1% of students represented minority groups (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2007) while current student demographic data reveal that 31% of students represent minority populations. As of the school’s most recent Profile and Performance Report published by the state’s Department of Education, 5.6% of students are English language learners, 48% of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, 14.8% of students receive special education services, and 21.9% of students were chronically absent in the 2016-2017 school year (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2017). As of 2016-2017, the school did not meet any of the state performance targets for student achievement in English language arts, mathematics, or science, as measured by state standardized assessments (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2017). A changing student population and evidence of high student needs regularly prompt teachers and administrators to explore more effective ways of reaching students.

For students to graduate from Shoreline High School, they must earn a minimum of 23 credits, at least 3 of which must be earned in social studies courses. Full-year courses are awarded one credit while half-year courses are awarded one-half of a credit. All students take Modern World History in ninth-grade, Global Issues and U.S. Government in 10th grade, and U.S. History in 11th grade. A variety of social studies electives are also available to students in grades 10, 11, and 12. The department includes 9 full-time teachers (average length teaching is 18 years). All courses are currently in the
process of revision to better reflect the inquiry-based shifts required within the state social studies framework.

Consequently, teachers are regularly trying to integrate reading and writing instruction within their social studies classrooms. The Modern World History course, which both of the study participants teach, includes an argumentative writing emphasis, which is also taught in collaboration with the English language arts teachers. Most students are grouped in heterogeneous sections of the class; however, an honors level exists for students who are preparing to take Advanced Placement courses beginning in their sophomore year. Two teachers currently teach the heterogeneous ninth-grade sections of Modern World History.

**Role of the researcher.** Action researchers are often practitioners who are internal to the research setting and seek to “deepen their own reflection on practice toward problem solving and professional development” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 38). As the instructional leader for social studies in this school district, I work closely with all teachers to strengthen their classroom practices. To that end, I teach one course at the high school (i.e., an honors section of Modern World History) and oversee all aspects of curriculum, instruction, and assessment within the department. Regular functions of my administrative role include facilitating professional development with teachers, observing classes to help teachers reflect on strengths and areas for improvement, and collaborating with other leaders to align building and district initiatives.

I meet with the ninth-grade teachers frequently since the class I teach includes students in that grade level. Consequently, I selected that grade level for this study since our group has an existing relationship as well as a habit of meeting regularly. Our
meetings are typically informal in nature; however, in this study, I took more of a facilitative role as we focused our work on implementing aspects of workshop model in the heterogeneous sections of the course. Therefore, as a participant-researcher, I organized and led all meetings, contributed my own ideas, took notes, and prompted participants with reflective questions, when necessary. I also conducted all classroom observations and interviews with the participants. Herr and Anderson (2015) caution insider researchers to acknowledge their own biases concerning the research topics to ensure that their findings are objective in nature. Although I use elements of the workshop model within my own teaching, the design of the study is focused exclusively on the participants’ experiences and is based on a collaborative structure to minimize the traditional “power relationship” that may be associated between researchers and participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 118).

Participants

Participants for this study include the two ninth-grade social studies teachers at Shoreline High School who teach the heterogeneous sections of the Modern World History course. To that end, participants reflect a purposeful sample since this group has previously explored elements of inquiry-based learning, disciplinary literacy, and a workshop model of instruction in the past. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that a purposeful sample allows a researcher “to discover, understand, and [gain] insight [using] a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 96). Since both participants collaborate regularly and meet with the researcher informally to discuss their practices, this group was selected as the focus of this study given their previous working relationship. Although I also teach a ninth-grade section, I am excluding myself as a participant since
my students are enrolled in a different level of that course. Furthermore, since I was facilitating the sessions with the participants, I focused primarily on my coaching role rather than on my own perceptions and practices related to using a workshop model.

Unlike quantitative research, results of qualitative case studies are not meant to provide statistical generalizations for a larger population (Yin, 2018). Yin added that case studies present “the opportunity to shed empirical light on some theoretical concepts or principles” (p. 37). Furthermore, Herr and Anderson (2015) stated that generalization to a larger population is not a particular outcome of action research studies since findings are primarily used to inform decision making at the research site. Therefore, although the present study included only two participants, the intent was to explore issues that were specific to that group and not necessarily relevant to others outside of our organization. Nevertheless, a thorough description of the research process is included if individuals in other settings wish to see whether it has transferability elsewhere.

**Leslie.** Leslie has taught at Shoreline High School for 16 years. She has an undergraduate degree in sociology and a master’s degree in education. She began teaching at the school after finishing her graduate coursework. After Leslie began teaching, she also completed a sixth-year program in school administration with other colleagues at the high school. Leslie has taught a variety of social studies courses at the school, including Modern World History, U.S. Government, Sociology, and Ancient History. Leslie has taught the Modern World History course since her first year in the profession and has helped to rewrite the curriculum several times. She frequently implements new instructional strategies in her classroom and volunteers to share those approaches with her colleagues during professional development days. Leslie was named
the 2018 teacher of the year at the high school based on one of her colleagues’ nominations of her. She is clearly a leader among other teachers and often serves as a mentor to beginning teachers.

**Alex.** Alex has taught at Shoreline High School for six years. He has an undergraduate degree in history and a master’s degree in education. He began teaching at the school as a long-term substitute and was hired as a permanent teacher the following year. Since being hired, Alex has primarily taught Modern World History but occasionally teaches a section of U.S. History, as well. Since he became a certified teacher after the Common Core State Standards were implemented, his teacher preparation program included specific coursework relative to embedding literacy in content area instruction. He employs a hands-on approach in the classroom and frequently asks students to use technology to conduct research or communicate conclusions. Alex regularly shares materials that he develops with other teachers and has positive relationships with his colleagues. Like Leslie, he has volunteered to present examples of his work to other teachers on professional development days.

Together, Leslie and Alex have a strong working relationship. They meet informally almost every day and frequently plan lessons together that they both later implement with their own classes. Although their approaches in their classes are slightly different (i.e., Leslie is slightly more teacher-centered, and Alex is more hands-on), both teachers are always trying to become more effective educators.

**Data Collection Measures, Instruments, and Tools**

The following section includes descriptions of the four data collection instruments used to develop an understanding of the constructs within the research questions as well as explanations of their intended uses.
Interviews. Interviewing allows a researcher to “enter into [another] person’s perspective” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 108). Three individual semi-structured interviews with each participant were conducted throughout the study, each designed to gather teachers’ self-reported perceptions relevant to the use of a workshop model of instruction at different points in time (see Appendix A). The first interview was scheduled within the first week of the study and included several experience, opinion, and feeling questions as tentatively identified in an interview guide (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The interview was developed by the researcher and reviewed for alignment to the research questions and purpose by two colleagues (one of whom holds a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction with an emphasis in reading, and another who holds an advanced degree in reading and has a strong familiarity with the workshop model.) I conducted the same interview at the midpoint and end of the study, but in the latter two, I added additional probes based on both participants’ responses.

Classroom observations. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated, “observational data represent a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account of the world obtained in an interview” (p. 137). I observed teachers three times (i.e., beginning, midpoint, and end of study) during their regularly scheduled Modern World History courses to gather data pertaining to teachers’ classroom instruction and observed practices using a workshop model. Each observation was 10 to 15 minutes in length. Since the district uses Danielson’s (2013) Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument, I recorded nonjudgmental evidence statements with a specific focus on the components related to designing coherent instruction, establishing a culture for learning, engaging students in learning, and using assessment in instruction. I have previously
completed training using this observation protocol and have passed proficiency and
calibration assessments related to accurate and objective evidence collection. Evidence
concerning the implementation of workshop model practices was scripted at the time of
the observations but was not scored with the corresponding evaluation rubric.

**Review of artifacts.** Documents and other artifacts provide additional insights
that cannot be obtained through interviews and observations alone (Merriam & Tisdell,
2016). To that end, both teacher-created and professional development artifacts were
collected throughout the study.

**Teacher artifacts.** Lesson- and perception-based artifacts were gathered from the
teachers throughout the 12 weeks. Lesson-based artifacts included samples of lesson
plans and assignments produced during professional development sessions or used during
classroom observations. These documents provided additional information related to the
practical implementation of a workshop model. Perception-based artifacts consisted of
periodic district-required reflections in which teachers discuss examples of professional
learning and the resulting applications to professional practice.

**Professional development artifacts.** I created an agenda for each professional
development meeting and recorded minutes detailing examples of our discussions,
learning activities, and action items (see Appendix B). These artifacts provided a record
of the nature of our sessions, particularly in how they evolved throughout the study.

**Researcher’s journal.** Throughout the study, I maintained a personal journal that
allowed me to be aware of my own perceptions and biases relative to the study. Merriam
and Tisdell (2016) advised researchers to record both descriptive and reflective notes
based on their own observations. Moreover, Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) stated a
researcher might use a journal to “[capture] the thinking that occurs in the school and classroom and within his or her own mind” (p. 109). I used my journal notes to guide my decisions throughout the study, and it served as a supplemental data source during my formal analysis of the data at the conclusion of the study.

**Research Procedure**

According to Mertler (2017), action research studies begin with a planning stage in which the researcher identifies a topic, reviews the literature related to the topic, and develops a research plan. Since a research plan is meant to guide the entire inquiry process (Efron & Ravid, 2013), all components of the study (e.g., research questions, data collection measures, analysis techniques) must be articulated at the outset of the study. Although I have been exploring the implications of a workshop model in social studies classes for a few years, I developed a specific research plan by examining the aforementioned local data in light of the literature related to constructivism, teachers’ perceptions and practices, and professional development. I finalized the research procedure in February 2019 and submitted the proposal for consideration by the University of South Carolina Institutional Review Board at that time.

The second stage of action research, the “acting” stage, consists of data collection and analysis (Mertler, 2017). Data collection occurred over 12 weeks from late February through May 2019. Throughout that segment, the two participants met with me weekly for job-embedded professional development sessions related to incorporating a workshop model in their classes. Since action research is often a dynamic and iterative process (Herr & Anderson, 2015), the agendas of our meetings were flexible based on teachers’ stated needs as well as my own observations. Therefore, although I determined specific
meeting topics in advance (e.g., collaborative lesson planning, developing projects or assessments, reviewing student work), I encouraged teachers to add their own items to our agendas, as well. Our meetings were scheduled for one 45-minute period each week throughout the study. The teachers sometimes met more frequently with me (or on their own) outside of these discussion times; however, our scheduled meetings constituted the formal professional learning opportunities.

**Weeks one through four.** Initial professional development sessions included an overview of the components of the workshop model, including the ways that inquiry-based learning and disciplinary literacy fit with that approach. I conducted the first interview and classroom observation with each teacher during week one. Evidence statements were transcribed electronically at the time of the observations. Any lesson materials produced during our professional development sessions or distributed to students were collected for later analysis.

During our first professional development session, participants completed an organizer in which they stated their beliefs about teaching and identified their own classroom practices that reflected those beliefs. Next, we watched a video in which Samantha Bennett and Cris Tovani describe how the workshop model represents a time-based lesson structure (Colorado Reading, 2017). Finally, we used a diagram to discuss how each component of the workshop model (i.e., opening, mini-lesson, work time, debrief) might be incorporated into a lesson. During this session and in all subsequent sessions, I recorded minutes during our meeting and shared them electronically with Leslie and Alex for their review.
Since both participants were familiar with the major components of the workshop model during our first session, I planned our second session to include a more specific analysis of a lesson incorporating that approach. I began session two with a warm-up activity in which I asked teachers to share their most memorable experiences as a student, what left them thinking after our first meeting, and something that was working well in their classes recently. I selected those prompts to review our previous session as well as to explore more fully the beliefs that guide participants’ practices. Following a brief discussion of those prompts, I distributed a sample lesson plan that utilized the workshop model and asked teachers to discuss it using the “Four As” text protocol: What assumptions does the author of the lesson hold? What do you agree with in the lesson? What do you want to argue with in the lesson? What parts of the lesson do you want to aspire to? (School Reform Initiative, 2017a). Following this discussion, we began to brainstorm our own lesson on the Treaty of Versailles using a workshop structure (see Appendix C). Using a backward design process (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), we agreed upon the learning targets and summative assessment for the lesson.

Sessions during weeks three and four were devoted to planning the lesson we identified during session two. Teachers had recently administered an in-class argumentative essay and expressed concerns with students’ abilities to extract meaningful information from sources and develop conclusions. Consequently, we focused the lesson around a document-based approach that required students to construct an argument based on a set of evidence that we modified from materials created by the DBQ Project (DBQ Project, 2019).
**Weeks five through eight.** During this segment, I engaged teachers in thinking about how to provide student choice of texts or tasks within the work time of the workshop model. During week six, I conducted the second interview and classroom observation. Evidence was collected and recorded in the same manner used in the first segment of the study.

I began our fifth session by asking participants to share how they provided students with choices in their classes. After a brief discussion of that prompt, I shared with participants a resource about text sets (“Guide to creating text sets,” n.d.). They read the document using a text rendering protocol in which they identified and discussed the most significant sentence, phrase, and word in the text (School Reform Initiative, 2017b). We discussed how text sets must include anchor texts that serve as the “hook” for the students and then brainstormed possible texts students might examine to analyze Adolf Hitler’s early leadership in Germany. Participants located three potential sources and asked if we could continue to search for additional sources during our next session.

Since compelling questions can help provide coherence to a set of otherwise “disconnected” texts (Grant et al., 2017), we devoted the first part of session six to determining an overarching question for our proposed text set. The participants were emphasizing characteristics of totalitarian leaders in their classes, so they developed a question related to that concept in response (i.e., How was Hitler able to convince a nation to support his vision for a new German empire?) Teachers located a primary source that detailed the platform of the Nazi Party and then used the remainder of the session to adapt the source for readability (Wineburg & Martin, 2009).
In weeks seven and eight, teachers compiled various resources for the rise of the Hitler lesson text set and then developed a workshop-based lesson that incorporated student choice into the task (see Appendix D). Since teachers had already taught our first jointly developed lesson and were beginning to use workshop-related strategies in their classes, these professional development sessions were used primarily as “work times” in which we located texts, determined instructional strategies, and planned the possible sequence and pacing for lesson activities. Participants began each session by discussing what was and was not going well in their classes, and I used that feedback to determine the starting points for our work.

**Weeks 9 through 12.** Professional development lessons during this segment focused on using student conferences as a method of assessment in class. During week 11, I conducted the final interview and classroom observation. Evidence was collected and recorded in the same manner used in the first and second segments of the study.

I began our ninth session with a brief “check-in” to see how participants were doing in applying workshop practices in their classrooms. After each teacher shared some examples of what they were currently working on in class, I explained that I wanted to focus on how conferences could be used as a tool for more tailored feedback during lessons. Teachers read the article “Feedback is a Two-Way Street” (Tovani, 2012) and recorded their thoughts on a handout that I had provided. We discussed each of our key takeaways and then watched an example of a teacher-student conference from the professional development video *Talk to Me* (Stenhouse Publishers, 2012). Teachers recorded their observations and then reflected upon their own thoughts by identifying what they believed to be the benefits of conferring and implications for their own
classrooms. Teachers shared their ideas and were tasked with trying some conferring strategies in their own classes throughout the following week.

During our week 10 meeting, teachers began by sharing how their initial conferences with students were going. We then watched a clip of another teacher-student conference that was available on YouTube (Kittle, 2014) and discussed what we noticed about the interactions between the teacher and students. Next, we began brainstorming a lesson that teachers would be able to teach in their classes that provided opportunities for conferring with students. Teachers identified a lesson topic, compelling question, and possible structure. For “homework,” teachers were again asked to continue conferring with students over the next week.

Weeks 11 and 12 were devoted to creating the lesson that teachers began brainstorming during week 10 (see Appendix E). After a brief check-in with teachers each week to see how their conferences were going, teachers continued to finalize the texts and activities for their final lesson. In week 11, teachers located an anchor text and began compiling possible sources for a text set. In week 12, teachers finished locating the sources and created a graphic organizer that students would complete while reading texts.

**Organization of data.** Merriam and Tisdell (2016) posit that qualitative researchers must develop a robust data organizational plan due to the volume of information that may be collected during the study. I collected data electronically and stored it on both my hard drive and a cloud-based platform. Data were organized in folders based on the phase of the study (i.e., one, two, and three) and type of evidence (e.g., interview transcripts, observation notes, lesson artifacts). Paper copies of lesson artifacts were scanned and uploaded to the pertinent folders. I maintained a master
inventory of data on a spreadsheet, which included the title of each file, its location, and a brief description. My researcher’s journal was maintained in a separate document and included ongoing notes throughout the study.

**Protection of data and participants.** Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that the credibility of the researcher is linked with the credibility of the research itself. To that end, I took precautions to protect my participants from the outset of the study. Creswell and Poth (2018) advised researchers to obtain informed consent from participants, so they are aware of the purpose and nature of the study prior to its implementation. Consequently, I spoke with each teacher individually about his or her participation in the research and provided them with a letter detailing the scope and nature of this work. I assured both teachers that their involvement would, in no way, be linked with their performance evaluations (e.g., observations, interview responses, and lesson artifacts would not be used for evaluation purposes). Since both teachers are tenured, they are likely more comfortable in openly expressing their viewpoints, but I reinforced that their responses could and should be as candid as possible. Finally, to protect participants’ personal information, I removed any identifying information as soon as I collected data. Participants are identified by pseudonyms, and their own names (or the names of their students) are redacted.

**Treatment, Processing, and Analysis of Data**

Throughout the study, I used formative data analysis as a method of guiding my work with participants in professional development sessions. According to Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014), formative analysis occurs as a researcher is collecting data and often consists of decision-making based on informal observations. Herr and Anderson (2015) added that ongoing analysis of data during a study “can help guide future actions
and research decisions” (p. 105). Since effective job-embedded professional development is based on participants’ actual needs at a given point in time (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2012), it was essential that my work with participants was timely and relevant. Therefore, I continually reviewed the evidence I was collecting, including my own notes in my researcher’s journal, to determine the next steps for our work. For instance, shortly after each professional development session concluded, I examined the meeting minutes along with any artifacts teachers produced that week (e.g., written reflection responses, lesson plans, etc.) Next, using that information, I developed an agenda for the subsequent meeting that included potential resources, instructional strategies, or discussion protocols that extended our work. I shared all agendas with participants prior to our meetings in order to give them the opportunity to provide suggestions, as well. Formative analysis of the data reinforces the inquiry-based nature of action research since it necessitates that we ask questions, adjust our work, and revisit our earlier thinking (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014).

Summative data analysis occurs at the conclusion of the action research process and allows the researcher to draw conclusions relative to the research questions (Mertler, 2017). To that end, I used a constant comparative method to formally analyze the data. Even though Glaser (1965) suggested the use of this approach when generating new theories, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argued that the iterative process of coding and categorizing data can be used in many types of qualitative research. I began with an open coding process to construct initial categories from data segments obtained from interviews, observations, and a review of artifacts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Once initial categories were identified from the first data sets, I used an axial coding process to
compare subsequent segments to the initial ones to reinforce or refine my groupings (Glaser, 1965; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This process was repeated with all sources of data until a level of saturation was reached, and a model depicting broad categories and subthemes was generated (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Triangulation enabled me to ensure the trustworthiness of the data collected by multiple corroborating sources of information from my own lens as a researcher (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Teachers’ self-reported perceptions from interviews were triangulated with their written goal reflections and minutes from professional development meetings. Evidence of teachers’ practices was available through classroom observations and a review of artifacts, providing the opportunity to triangulate both data sets. Finally, analysis of the relationship between teachers’ perceptions and practices was examined by corroborating interviews and goal reflections with classroom observations and artifacts. Table 3.1 illustrates the relationship between the various sources of data and the research questions for this study.

Additionally, I ensured validity through the lens of the study participants by using member checking procedures. Following each interview, I provided each teacher with a transcript that also included my initial coding and interpretive memos. With member checking, interviewees were able to provide feedback after reviewing my preliminary interpretations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), allowing respondents to “confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). This process provided participants with a voice in category construction.

Finally, I maintained rigor and trustworthiness by using peer review in the analysis of classroom observation evidence. Lincoln and Guba stated that a peer reviewer
“provides support, plays devil’s advocate, challenges the researchers’ assumptions, pushes the researchers to the next step methodologically and asks hard questions about methods and interpretations” (as cited in Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 129). For the purpose of this study, the peer reviewer was another district administrator who has earned proficiency in observing teachers using Danielson’s (2013) Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument. This administrator reviewed all classroom observation evidence statements for objectivity and alignment to the pertinent components of the framework.

Table 3.1 Sources of Data Linked to Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Classroom Observations</th>
<th>Review of Artifacts</th>
<th>Researcher’s Journal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do teachers’ perceptions related to the workshop model used within social studies classrooms change over time?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>The researcher’s journal was used as a secondary source to aid in the analysis of all three research questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do teachers’ practices related to the workshop model used within social studies classrooms change over time?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do teachers’ perceptions of disciplinary literacy and the workshop model influence their classroom practices?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

Chapter 3 included a description of the research process and methods of analysis used in this study. First, a rationale for framing the research as a qualitative case study using an action research approach was provided. A description of the research setting followed, including specific details relevant to the school, department, researcher, and
participants. Next, the various sources of data used to examine the research question were provided along with an outline of how the study was to be conducted over 12 weeks. The chapter concluded with a description of how the constant comparative approach would be used to analyze the data collected. Chapter 4 presents the findings gleaned from an analysis of the data.
Chapter 4
Presentation and Analysis of Data

Overview of Study

As social studies teachers are increasingly expected to integrate inquiry-based approaches into their teaching (NCSS, 2013), it becomes necessary to examine how lessons are designed and sequenced (Grant et al., 2017; NCSS, 2013). The purpose of this study was to investigate how high school social studies teachers’ perceptions and practices changed over time when they used a workshop-based model to approach their lessons. Using a workshop model, teachers intentionally structure class time to maximize student engagement through reading, writing, and discussion (Tovani, 2011). Consequently, this approach allows students to develop disciplinary literacy skills as they concurrently construct their own understandings of course concepts. To that end, the study sought to address the following research questions:

1. How do teachers’ perceptions related to the workshop model used within social studies classrooms change over time?
2. How do teachers’ practices related to the workshop model used within social studies classrooms change over time?
3. How do teachers’ perceptions of disciplinary literacy and the workshop model influence their classroom practices?

Participants included two ninth-grade Modern World History teachers who work at a large suburban high school in New England. Leslie has taught Modern World History
for 16 years and is generally open to using new instructional strategies in her classroom. She frequently presents new teaching approaches during district-sponsored professional development days and mentors beginning teachers in the school. She takes a somewhat teacher-centered approach in the classroom but is open to feedback relative to making her classes more student-centered. Alex has taught Modern World History for the past six years. As a newer teacher, he was required to take courses related to literacy-based instruction and technology integration prior to earning his teacher certification. Thus, he typically integrates hands-on, project-based opportunities into his classes to build students’ reading and writing skills. Although both participants have somewhat different teaching styles, they plan together regularly to ensure that they are addressing the same standards and objectives in their lessons.

Throughout the study, several sources of data were collected to examine the research questions thoroughly. Data included interviews, class observations, lesson artifacts, and artifacts from planning meetings with the teacher-participants. Table 4.1 summarizes the types and instances of data that were used for this study.

Intervention

The study was conducted over 12 weeks, from late February through May of 2019. During that time, I met with participants weekly to conduct job-embedded professional development focused around using a workshop model of instruction in high school social studies classes. Job-embedded professional development differs from the “standalone” professional development teachers often receive since it is tailored to teachers’ current work and allows them to actually implement new learning throughout the process (Croft et al., 2010). In this case, our professional development sessions were
structured around examining some of the crucial components of workshops and then applying them to teacher-created lessons.

Table 4.1 Instances of Data Collected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Quantity Collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews (per participant)</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview questions gauged participants’ perceptions about the workshop model at various points of the study.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observations (per participant)</td>
<td>Classroom observations gauged teachers’ practices and allowed for the examination of how perceptions influence practices.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson artifacts (per participant)</td>
<td>Lesson artifacts included actual materials used during classroom observations.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development meeting minutes</td>
<td>Meeting minutes included notes from weekly sessions with the two participants.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development notetaking organizers (per participant)</td>
<td>Notetaking organizers were artifacts that included participants’ notes and reactions during our meetings.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development warm-ups and exit slips (per participant)</td>
<td>Warm-ups and exit slips were artifacts that included participants’ thoughts at the beginning or end of our meetings.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development lessons</td>
<td>Professional development lessons were instructional activities designed by the participants and researcher during our meetings.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In weeks one through four, participants examined samples of workshop-based lessons and then designed their own collaborative lesson that incorporated those same components. During weeks five through eight, teachers examined the use of text sets in social studies classes and designed a second collaborative lesson that incorporated student choice. In weeks 9 through 12, teachers examined strategies for conferring with
students and created a third collaborative lesson that incorporated both text sets and opportunities for conferences. Throughout these weeks, teachers also applied the strategies they were learning in their own classrooms and reported on their progress during our meeting discussions or through short written warm-ups and exit slips. Thus, participants were able to experiment with new approaches together as well as on their own in their classrooms. Interviews with individual participants as well as observations of their classes allowed me to see how each teacher was applying his or her learning at various points of time in the study. Consequently, the plans for our sessions were dynamic in nature since they often were designed based on teachers’ individual or collaborative needs.

**General Findings and Results**

The following section includes general findings based on an analysis of the data. Throughout the study, data sources were analyzed informally to determine the “next steps” for each professional development session. For example, participants’ questions, comments, and work produced during each session allowed me to plan the following sessions based on their specific needs. At the conclusion of the study, data were analyzed more formally, using a constant comparative method that incorporated both open and axial coding. To that end, I initially coded the data with the three research questions in mind and grouped common ideas within each data set. For each subsequent data set, I again determined codes based on the research questions but compared those to the ones derived from previous data sets. Ultimately, I analyzed common categories across data sets to assess three overarching themes. Figure 4.1 presents these themes as well as the more specific subthemes that were identified based on the particular data segments.
**Theme 1: Setting expectations.** Although workshop-based lessons are meant to allow students to emerge with their own conclusions relative to the instructional focus, teachers using this approach typically ensure that their lessons are deliberately planned to minimize whole-class instruction and maximize student-centered engagement (Bennett, 2007; Tovani, 2011, 2017). In each week that I worked with Leslie and Alex, we focused on planning with a student-driven focus in mind. Given our focus on consistency in lesson design and presentation, I was able to identify three subthemes that captured how participants set expectations in their own classes: framing lessons, creating a “need to know,” and establishing a structure for learning.

**Framing lessons.** One feature of lessons using the workshop model is that they are framed around learning targets or objectives that are clearly communicated to students at the beginning of the lesson (Tovani, 2011, 2017). At the start of the study,
participants used learning targets to frame their lessons, but they were primarily task-based or for the teacher’s own use. For example, in Leslie’s first interview, she shared:

I work with my grade-level counterparts to determine what we need students to know, and then we figure out how we can address what we need them to know. . . . I share with students the activities that they are doing in class, but I don’t always state a learning outcome for them to see or hear.

During her first classroom observation, Leslie began the lesson by introducing the activity she wanted students to complete: “While you are watching this video clip, I want you to find five ideas or details about this event, and then we are going to talk about why it is important.” In that lesson, even though the teacher communicated the task to the students, no overview of what they were going to learn that day in class was provided.

Alex initially shared in his first interview that he liked to provide students with a “road map” for the lesson in the form of a list he posted on the board:

Usually, I have what I call a daily task written on the board. The task is essentially what students need to start with, what our procedure is—pretty much our to-do list for the day. It’s a way to give students a heads up knowing that they will be held accountable for either turning something in at the start of class or that they will have homework that night. Today, students were taking notes, so I listed some questions that we would be focusing on in class.

During Alex’s first observation, he had a general objective posted on the board (i.e., “Identify causes of World War I,”) along with two content-based questions: “What caused tension among nations prior to World War I? What can we identify as the “spark”
that began the war?” Although the objective was posted for students to see, it was included for informational, rather than instructional, purposes.

Since learning targets form the backbone of a workshop lesson, I focused several of our early professional development sessions on an examination of how learning targets could be used in class, with opportunities for participants to create their own objectives for upcoming lessons. For example, during our professional development session on March 7, 2019, both participants reviewed a sample workshop-based lesson that was framed around several open-ended questions. Both teachers agreed that the questions allowed students to focus on big ideas and make connections to modern-day issues. Alex noted that the questions were likely written to identify possible student misconceptions that might arise when learning about the topic. With this idea in mind, I began to work with participants to help them develop their own “big” questions that matched their learning outcomes. Since inquiry-based instruction should be framed around questions that are compelling for students (NCSS, 2013), I thought that developing our targets from such big questions would be a logical starting point.

During our professional development sessions on March 7th, March 13th, and March 22nd, Leslie and Alex planned an inquiry-based lesson that was framed around the question: “Was the Treaty of Versailles an effective agreement for keeping world peace?” With that question as their starting point, they created two learning targets to support students’ exploration of it: (a) I can extract evidence from texts that reflect the differing perspectives of nations at the end of World War I and (b) I can produce an evidence-based argument that addresses the compelling question.
Alex subsequently commented in his second interview that he was beginning to introduce instruction with thought-provoking questions that led students into an investigation of the topics they were studying for that particular day. He shared that such questions allowed him to address any misconceptions that he was noticing or anticipating. For example, Alex began his second observation with the question: “Does Josef Stalin deserve the title ‘Father of Modern Russia’?” He shared with students that they were going to think about that question while practicing finding evidence from texts. Alex informed students that they were practicing that skill based on some of the patterns he noticed in essays they recently wrote. In this sense, the teacher used the question to frame the exploration of the content, and an example of students’ previous work to communicate the actual learning activity students would be completing in class that day.

In Leslie’s second interview, she shared that she was finding it helpful to work with her grade-level partner to determine how to frame their lessons: “When we collaborate, we ask each other: What do students need to know? What is the goal, and what activities will we plan to support that goal?” Consequently, she also began posting and communicating outcomes for students to see and hear at the beginning of the period. For example, during Leslie’s second classroom observation, she had a learning target posted on the board (i.e., “I will read and interpret documents about Stalin’s effect on the Russian people,”) and she verbally told students that it was their goal to determine how exactly Stalin used gulags to enforce his totalitarian rule. Learning targets were beginning to be crafted for student use (e.g., written in the first person, shared with students), and were used to begin the lesson.
Once teachers began planning collaborative lessons during our professional development sessions and started to become more intentional about their learning outcomes when planning, I observed that they began to frame all additional lessons using that structure when we worked together. For example, when we began to develop a workshop-based lesson during our professional development meeting on April 4, 2019, Leslie and Alex first brainstormed a possible question that might help frame that lesson (i.e., “How was Hitler able to convince a nation to support his vision for a new German empire?”) Similarly, when we began planning another lesson during a professional development session on May 9, 2019, the teachers structured that lesson around the question: “Was the division of Germany the correct response of the Allies after World War II?”

Teachers also continued to frame lessons using a question-based structure, with learning targets, in their own classrooms. For example, during Alex’s third class observation, he shared with students that they were trying to determine an answer to the question: “Was the use of Executive Order 9066 and the internment of Japanese-Americans the correct response by the United States Government?” He had three more specific focus questions posted on the board: “Why did the US enter the war? What was the response of the US? Was the US response appropriate?” Similarly, During Leslie’s third class observation, she had a learning target posted on the board (i.e., “I will evaluate how various individuals might have responded to the Pearl Harbor attack based on their positions in society,”) along with an accompanying question: “Do you think President Roosevelt made the right call in sending our country into World War II? Why or why not?”
Table 4.2 presents the progression of teachers’ communication of objectives or learning targets with their students throughout the study.

Table 4.2 Communication of Learning Targets During Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Leslie Obs. 1</th>
<th>Leslie Obs. 2</th>
<th>Leslie Obs. 3</th>
<th>Alex Obs. 1</th>
<th>Alex Obs. 2</th>
<th>Alex Obs. 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was the learning target or objective verbally communicated to students?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the learning target or objective posted for students to see?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alex shared in his third interview that designing lessons using this approach is more time consuming than planning lessons in a more “traditional” sense: “It requires a lot of forethought. What is necessary for students to know? What content do you cut? What skills do you emphasize?” Leslie agreed with Alex’s point of view during her third interview, sharing that the sources she selects also drive the way she plans her lessons:

I am focusing more on the “diagram” of a workshop lesson, and in doing that, I first think about what sources I want students to read and discuss, and then what I want them to think about while reading those sources. I think more about what students will be thinking about themselves or with one another rather than what I am going to present to my students.

Although teachers planned with specific outcomes in mind from the outset of the study, they became more intentional in linking those outcomes to the questions students would be grappling with during their lessons. In most cases, their questions were argumentative in nature, which helped reinforce the inquiry-based nature of the activities students would ultimately complete. Teachers found the process time consuming, but
they agreed that it helped students consider the most essential content related to the lessons rather than all of the “facts” associated with a topic.

Creating a “need to know.” Since inquiry-based lessons should move students beyond a simple exploration of content (Grant et al., 2017), I regularly asked teachers to consider the actual purpose for teaching their subject-specific content to students. Moreover, I asked them to think about their own roles in the classroom relative to communicating the importance of the lesson to their students. Initially, teachers stated that it was essential that they plan instruction to emphasize the skills students would use outside of school.

In Leslie’s first interview, she reflected upon how she approached lesson planning around students’ needs beyond the classroom:

I think it is my role to teach content, but I find nowadays that we teach more general life skills, too. My role is to facilitate and spark interest, but I also realize that not every student loves history. I try to help them find ways to spark that joy. That might mean that I need to let them get frustrated when they are searching for answers, but it’s my job to equip them with the skills to figure out how to solve those problems.

To that end, in Leslie’s first class observation, she tried to stimulate student interest with encouraging statements (e.g., “Listen to this—it’s very interesting.”) She modeled how students could analyze how World War I started by asking cause-and-effect types of questions (e.g., “By Princip assassinating the Archduke, what did that do?”, “If this hadn’t happened, what might not have happened?”)
Likewise, Alex stated in his first interview that he approached his lessons by thinking about what would “pull in” his students. For example, in his first class observation, he began the lesson with a map that students had previously examined (detailing the various fronts of World War I) and used that as an entry point for the lesson (i.e., “Are there any predictions as to how this war might play out based on the map?”)

Both participants’ initial comments reflected their enthusiasm toward the content and desire for students to apply general problem-solving skills to historical scenarios.

I framed part of our first professional development session around a discussion of participants’ beliefs about teaching, since those beliefs, in turn, affect how teachers approach their lessons. Consequently, I consolidated our comments into three statements that we used to guide our work in subsequent sessions (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Participants’ beliefs about teaching

As the study progressed, teachers continued to encourage students’ efforts and reinforced how social studies learning was really preparation for life “beyond” the
classroom. For example, in Alex’s second interview, he shared his thinking relative to selecting the appropriate skills to address during his lessons:

Traditionally our field is so much about memorization—just the facts. I think that bringing in certain skills and reinforcing those skills is essential for our kids to be successful in life. For example, when students write an AEA [an internal assessment], they are all reading the same articles and are drawing different conclusions. That’s a skill that’s essential after high school and one that I want to focus on in every class.

In Leslie’s second class observation, she justified for her students why she wanted them to discuss their thoughts, rather than copy ideas word-for-word, during a jigsaw activity:

I want you to move into your groups and share your stories. I don’t want you to copy word for word what you have on your paper or pass your papers to one another. What I want you to do is talk to one another about what you learned and try to develop a general consensus of what life was like in Stalinist Russia.

By the end of the study, teachers continued to use the key beliefs we identified during our earlier professional development sessions to guide their lesson design and conversations with students. Leslie stated in her third interview that it had been “nice to give students a big question and then allow them to draw conclusions, since that is what they need to do in life, too.” In his third class observation, Alex shared with a student: “This is my favorite resource . . . I find this very interesting” and stated to the entire class, “I really want you to work together to determine perspective.” Both teachers ultimately used content as a vehicle for the development of such “life skills.”
Establishing a structure for learning. During our professional development meetings, we continually revisited the idea of how teachers were structuring learning time in class. In a webinar for the Colorado Reading Association, Cris Tovani and Sam Bennett stated that the critical components of a workshop lesson (e.g., opening, mini-lesson, work time, debrief) are all essential, but that it is up to the teacher to determine how to sequence those components (Colorado Reading, 2017). Consequently, during each meeting, we thoughtfully considered how we were structuring lessons to maximize student engagement.

Teachers initially reported the importance of having routines and structures in class but primarily relied on whole-class learning of social studies concepts. For example, in Leslie’s first interview, she stated:

I have students on a routine. We start with a recap of what we talked about the previous day and then connect it to the unit in general. If it’s a new unit, I try to connect it to what we looked at in the past or even what’s happening nowadays. Most of the lesson is usually discussion about a topic. Sometimes students will move into groups, work with a partner, or take notes. In the last couple of minutes, I try to sum up everything that they did as they walk out the door.

Similarly, in Alex’s first interview, he also stated that his lessons did not necessarily follow a common format: “We go through the process, whatever it is we are doing for the day, but it changes from day to day. How I sequence the lesson really depends on what students are doing each day.” Consequently, Leslie’s and Alex’s first class observations were structured as whole-class activities in which the teachers lectured and directed a discussion around topics related to the outbreak of World War I.
As the study progressed, teachers increasingly shifted to open-ended structures and shared that a benefit of workshops was that they established a more positive culture for learning. During the March 13th professional development session, both teachers shared that they were beginning to think about organizing lessons differently. For example, Alex was in the process of having his students create card games based on what they were learning in class. He stated that he approached the lesson as a multi-day activity, with one day of modeling and two periods of research. He pulled groups together for mini-lessons based on their topics. Similarly, Leslie shared that when she was presenting notes to students, she was attempting to provide them with more time to work on their own to apply their learning. She called them back together periodically but did not keep them as a whole group for the entire lesson.

As I worked with the teachers to finalize collaborative lessons during weeks 4, 8, and 11 of the study, we integrated all of the aspects of a workshop structure into each of the learning activities. Figure 4.3 includes the general lesson progression that we used for the initial lesson that we later replicated when planning follow-up lessons. Once we developed our first collaborative lesson, teachers began to plan their independent lessons using that same approach.

During Leslie’s second class observation, she provided students with some independent work time and then shifted the task to a group sharing activity. In between the activities, she provided a brief mini-lesson related to effective group participation. She relied on students to direct the flow of the lesson progression (e.g., “Do we need two more minutes or are we good?” Students asked for additional time to discuss their work, and the teacher allowed them to resume discussing the texts.) Reflecting upon this
practice during her second interview, Leslie stated “each day, there is a segment of time for the kids to do something or interact with one another.” She commented during the March 22nd professional development meeting, “workshops allow time to move back and forth between teacher-centered and student-centered learning.” Again, Leslie followed a similar lesson structure during her third class observation, during which students worked in jigsaw groups following an independent work time.

Figure 4.3 Sample workshop lesson structure

In Alex’s second interview, he stated that he was beginning his lessons by modeling a task or skill, but that the actual lesson activities, themselves, were dependent upon where he saw students struggling. He elaborated on this process in his third interview: “I might model for students what they’re doing, give them time to work on the task, and then check in throughout the period.” During the May 22nd professional development meeting, Alex shared that a higher concentration on lesson structure “has created a classroom climate and culture that allows for students to ask questions and
allows for them to dig deeper in the content.” In his third classroom observation, the lesson was structured in an entirely self-directed nature, with students each analyzing different sources as the teacher moved from group to group to meet with students. Although he briefly called the entire class together for one short moment, the lesson immediately returned to a student-directed structure as soon as the teacher stopped speaking.

Overall, Leslie and Alex shared positive observations regarding the improvement of the class environment based on the use of a workshop structure in class. In Alex’s third interview, he reflected upon his improved relationships with his students:

I thought I had a good rapport, but using this structure seems to be creating deeper relationships with the students. They seem more trusting and willing to do the work because they know I am going to check in with them and not let them fail.

Leslie shared a similar sentiment in her third interview:

Sometimes I still deliver information, but I’m trying to make more of an effort to let the students do the work. My classroom is looking different because the desks are more often clustered together, and I am finding myself sitting with students more regularly to help them with their work. I think more about the sources students can read and discuss with one another rather than what I am going to share with my students. It’s more active in there.

**Theme 2: Promoting engagement.** Since all of our professional development sessions focused on finding ways to increase students’ time in class to read, write, and discuss ideas with one another, several data segments revealed teachers’ efforts to engage students in different ways. Approaches teachers used to support that goal included
providing text choices, using reading strategies in instruction, allowing students to “make meaning” of the content, and incorporating student-centered elements into their classes.

**Text choices.** Teachers provided an increasing amount of text choice to students throughout the study. At the beginning of the study, both teachers reported that they liked to use a variety of texts in their classes. In her first interview, Leslie shared the following comment about text variety:

> I try to integrate as many different types of texts as possible, so if students are reading an informational article, maybe I’ll find a cartoon or picture for them to look at, too. So, I try to find credible sources that they can look at but also can understand. I think they need choice, but I also think that there are certain ideas they need to know. So, I think it’s important to find a balance between teacher-selected materials and ones that students can choose.

Alex also shared his desire to use different types of texts during his first interview:

> I try to bring in a variety of texts, whether they are images or political cartoons, posters, or propaganda. If I can find them, I like to use diaries and letters so students can get a better perspective of whatever they are learning about. For example, when they studied imperialism, I brought in some texts by King Leopold since it was actually someone saying the same ideas we were discussing.

Despite the use of a variety of text types in class, initial observations revealed a lack of student choice concerning what they were to read. For example, in Leslie’s first class observation, she referenced a fictional play that students had previously read. In class, all students were viewing the same video and complementary images that the teacher selected to go along with it. In Alex’s first class observation, he used the same
sources as Leslie, but also added a map that students examined for context as well as a political cartoon that all students viewed. In both classes, all students were responsible for reading all texts. Likewise, our initial collaborative lesson designed during professional development (completed on March 13th) included a document-based activity that involved several articles from the Treaty of Versailles, a map, images of a French village before and after the war, and excerpts from President Wilson’s 14 Points. All the students were responsible for reading all texts.

As the study progressed, particularly once we began exploring text sets during professional development meetings, teachers began to articulate the importance of student choice in texts they read. During a professional development meeting on February 27th, Alex identified as a core belief that he wanted to “give students different opportunities and exposure on how to work with different materials.” Several weeks later, during professional development on March 22nd, he shared, “it would be a challenge to find the time and appropriate resources to enact the workshop model often.” After we began to examine how to use text sets with students in the subsequent meeting, Alex remarked, “Text sets can include a variety of options that lend themselves to differentiation. They can be used to help students investigate any topic.” Leslie added during that same meeting, “text sets can allow us to incorporate many more documents because the students can explore on their own and dig deeper into the content.”

In Leslie’s second interview, she was more open to providing students with choice, but she still believed that it was the teacher’s responsibility to determine the content students explored:
I like to give students more choices for how they learn rather than what they learn. I think that the teacher considers the main ideas and then curates sources or thinks of options that students might have available to them, almost like a guided choice. This thinking was evident in observation two, during which students were provided with a set of primary source excerpts related to life in the gulags under Stalin, and they then read the one that best aligned to their interests.

In Alex’s second interview, he was more open to students having some choice over the texts they read in class:

We want them to answer a question, but how they get to that answer is flexible. Options are necessary. As any adult, when you need to solve a problem, there is not one set way that you are told to solve it.

During his second class observation, Alex provided students with a set of 10 short sources related to Stalin’s leadership. Sources included excerpts from speeches, charts, and the Soviet Constitution, along with some secondary sources. Alex provided the students with a short segment of work time in which they selected five to seven sources to read as they practiced a strategy that he had previously modeled in class.

By the end of the study, teachers had developed several lessons that provided complete choice relative to the texts students read in class. Both teachers spoke positively about how choice drove engagement in their classes. Such choice-based lessons were developed both collaboratively and independently (outside of our professional development sessions).

To model the development of a choice-based lesson, I worked with teachers beginning on our April 4th professional development session to develop a lesson on
Hitler’s rise to power that incorporated the use of a text set. Teachers selected two anchor texts that all students would read to build background knowledge: an excerpt from the course textbook on some of the problems the Weimar Republic faced following the end of World War I, and a primary source excerpt of the 25 Points of the Nazi Party. Teachers began to locate additional resources, including propaganda images, an excerpt of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, and a video clip of a speech Hitler made to teenagers. Additional texts teachers found between April 4th and April 24th included a Ted-ED video on Hitler’s rise to power, a website about Germany under Hitler, a timeline of Hitler’s rise and fall, and additional short primary and secondary source accounts. Teachers planned to allow students to choose any five to seven sources that they wanted to read to gain a better understanding of the lesson question.

Teachers planned another text set lesson on the early events of the Cold War during professional development sessions from May 9th to May 22nd. They located a short skit that highlighted the discussions at the Yalta Conference that would serve as an anchor text for all students to read. As with the lesson on Hitler, teachers located several texts from which students were to choose four or five to answer a lesson question that related to the division of Germany. Texts included informational articles about the division of Germany, maps, primary source accounts of life in East Germany, speeches, and a timeline.

In her third interview, Leslie commented that our work related to text sets had prompted her to provide students with more text choices in class:

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I like to give students a mix of texts to choose from. I try to vary it—primary sources, images, articles that have modern-day questions, or even thought-provoking questions are all ones that I try to offer to my students.

During Leslie’s third observation, students did not have a choice in the texts they read (i.e., all students read Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Pearl Harbor speech), but they were able to determine the perspective from which they examined the source (e.g., member of Congress, civilian). She included a video clip that all students were responsible for viewing.

Alex shared in his third interview how using text sets was transformative to how he taught:

I love them—they’re great. There is a wealth of information in each one. Students can pick and choose what they can work with. In the end, I am seeing students coming away with deeper understandings because they are actually choosing what they are learning.

Alex’s third observation was centered entirely around the examination of a text set related to Japanese-American internment. A video clip on the bombing of Pearl Harbor and a webpage providing background on Executive Order 9066 served as anchor texts. Alex then provided 10 additional texts, from which students were asked to choose 4 or 5 to review. Texts included webpages, letters from children in the internment camps, videos, government publications, propaganda posters, a 1943 radio broadcast, and an interactive timeline.

Table 4.3 includes a depiction of the use of text sets during collaboratively and individually planned lessons throughout the study.
Table 4.3 Use of Text Sets in Modern World History Lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Choice-Based Text Set?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leslie observation one (causes of WWI)</td>
<td>2/21/19</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex observation one (causes of WWI)</td>
<td>2/22/19</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative lesson one (Treaty of Versailles)</td>
<td>3/22/19</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leslie observation two (Stalin’s labor camps)</td>
<td>4/12/19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex observation two (Stalin’s leadership)</td>
<td>4/22/19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative lesson two (Hitler’s rise to power)</td>
<td>4/24/19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex observation three (Japanese internment)</td>
<td>5/16/19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leslie observation three (Pearl Harbor)</td>
<td>5/17/19</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative lesson three (division of Germany)</td>
<td>5/22/19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reading strategies.** Teachers’ use of disciplinary literacy strategies improved throughout the study. Throughout the study, both participants acknowledged the importance of reading instruction to support learning in their classes. Initial data indicated a reliance on the use of general reading strategies that were not necessarily discipline-specific. For example, in Leslie’s first interview, she commented on the importance of teaching literacy in social studies:

> It is extremely important to be able to read different types of texts in order to study history. I don’t think you can teach social studies and not teach literacy. You have to teach the kids how to read different kind of texts. They might associate reading with the novels they read for English classes and not know how to pull out bolded words, find important ideas, or even read with a purpose.

In the initial observation of Leslie’s class, the primary literacy approach she used was to have students locate and record evidence about the outbreak of World War I from a short video that she played for the class. Although students generated their own examples, the teacher summarized the video when students finished watching it.
Alex also discussed the importance of literacy instruction in his first interview:

As a social studies teacher, isn’t that why we are here—to teach literacy skills? Everyone takes the written word as fact, but there’s much more to get into by digging deeper. . . . From a social studies perspective, we need to teach students how to interpret a document or set of materials. For example, at the end of class today, I put up a World War I “Crime of the Ages” cartoon. I asked students, ‘What is going on here and what can you learn from it?’ Kids typically don’t recognize that the cartoon was from the Chicago Tribune, and that means something in 1914 when the U.S. was not even in the war. Focusing on literacy skills helps students a lot more about what was going on in history.

In Alex’s first observation, he guided the whole class through some general literacy-related activities, such as using evidence to support a point. For example, when displaying a map of 1914 Europe, he asked, “Are there any predictions as to how this war might play out based on the map?” When a student responded, “It will be a big war,” Alex replied, “Can you explain what you mean by “big war” based on what you see on the map?” Later in the lesson, when students were to examine a political cartoon, Alex provided some questions to guide their analysis:

1. Where and when was this published?

2. How does this cartoon describe the chain of events that led to the war?

3. What does this cartoon identify as the cause of WWI?

Again, general literacy strategies (e.g., comprehension, analysis) were used to support student learning.
Once we began our professional development work, teachers’ subsequent lessons more frequently included purposeful segments that focused on either basic or disciplinary literacy development. During the March 13th professional development session, teachers first discussed how to incorporate more intentional literacy strategies based on the purpose of the lesson. For example, one of the learning targets for the first collaborative lesson on the Treaty of Versailles was to extract evidence that reflected the different perspectives of the nations at the end of the war. The teachers determined that a mini-lesson specifically focused on highlighting and annotating a text based on a guiding question would set up students for success in the later parts of the lesson. Following teacher modeling of that skill, students would have the opportunity to apply it independently as they read additional sources.

Despite recognition that literacy development is essential in social studies classes, participants acknowledged as the study progressed that content area teachers often must consider how to find the right balance between teaching content and skills. Alex shared in his second interview, “Especially in social studies, there’s the idea of content versus skills. What do we focus on?” In Leslie’s second interview, she underscored how literacy development must sometimes supersede content instruction: “We hope students have the basic literacy skills, but sometimes you still need to take a step back from the content and show students how to pull a quote, cite evidence, or detect a counterclaim.”

In teachers’ classroom observations, it was evident that they were trying to find the correct “balance” that they had identified during their interviews. For example, in Leslie’s second class observation, she approached a group that was analyzing a source and realized that students were not addressing the central idea of “collective guilt.”
Consequently, she framed students’ discussion around analyzing one specific text passage: “You’re absolutely right with the stories you are talking about here, but maybe look at that first paragraph and see if you can get a definition of collective guilt based on what it says.” The teacher approached another group and provided some context about the author’s life to help them understand his motivation for writing the source.

In Alex’s second observation, he also emphasized for students the importance of content-specific vocabulary in understanding texts: “Read the first document on your own and highlight any examples of repetition or vocabulary words that you have heard in the unit.” A student shared, “It’s not repetition, but with the strong language Stalin uses, he shows how strong they are—how he brought Russia from capitalism to communism.” Alex stated, “So these are all ideas that you can put in your annotation. The purpose of writing an annotation is when you go to write your essay, you can pull from those ideas.” Ultimately, students were using these basic literacy skills to understand broader course concepts.

I worked with participants during our subsequent professional development sessions to explore some specific ways of structuring lessons to include literacy skill development. For example, in the text set lesson on Hitler’s leadership (which we finished writing during the April 4th professional development session), teachers developed a “building background” organizer that included general comprehension questions (i.e., What were the conditions in Germany after World War I? What were the Nazi Party’s solutions to improve these conditions?) as well as a prediction prompt (i.e., Why do you think these events led to the rise of Hitler?). During the activity, teachers planned to ask students to record examples of main ideas on Post-it notes. Alex created
an additional scaffold by providing sentence stems on slips of paper in place of the Post-it notes. Each slip included the phrase, “To convince the nation to support him, Hitler did the following . . .” In another text set lesson on the early events of the Cold War (finished during the May 22nd professional development session), the teachers developed an organizer in which students identified main ideas and recorded their reactions in light of the larger historical question. Together, these activities indicate how teachers were beginning to embed more strategic literacy-based approaches into routine instruction.

Toward the end of the study, once we had created several lessons that were text-based in nature, teachers started to discuss more specifically the importance of supporting students’ development of social studies-specific skills. For example, in his third interview, Alex shared that students needed to be able to evaluate the usefulness of sources: “There is so much information out there for students, whether it is Wikipedia or blogs, that students need to learn to filter through the information to find what is the most relevant to what they are learning.” In his third class observation, Alex asked students to think about which sources would best address the question related to the justification for Executive Order 9066. Consequently, students needed to decide for themselves, using skills they had learned in class, how to select the most appropriate documents, given the topic and task.

Leslie also commented in her third interview on the need to support students’ development of disciplinary literacy skills: “Students need to think about an author’s point of view, the period in which the document was written, where it originated, etc. before they even read a text.” In her third observation, Leslie asked students to record some general critical points related to the Pearl Harbor speech but also provided prompts
that allowed them to consider the text from various perspectives (e.g., What are you thinking while listening to the speech? What is your reaction toward the Japanese? Has your opinion changed since the attack?) In essence, Leslie reinforced that students’ considerations of the author’s or audience’s perspectives were essential to understanding the implications of a text’s message.

Figure 4.4 includes a visual representation of the literacy skills teachers emphasized throughout the study.

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**Figure 4.4 General and disciplinary literacy skills in lessons**

Although initial lessons focused more on general literacy strategies, later lessons included a mix of general and disciplinary skills to advance students’ conceptual understandings.

**Making meaning.** Both teachers initially stated that it was important for students to be able to draw conclusions in class, but participants’ early lessons and comments did not provide opportunities for students to “make meaning” on their own. For example, Leslie shared in her first interview:
I think it is essential for students to look at documents and draw their own conclusions. I think we do this a lot when we teach writing when we give students different points-of-view and have them work through those perspectives to come to their own ideas.

Yet, during Leslie’s first class observation, there were no opportunities for students to make meaning other than through responding to questions that were posed to the whole class. Similarly, Alex shared in his first interview, “a workshop should put more accountability on the students since they must be responsible for creating or doing something.” However, his first class observation also did not include opportunities for students to make meaning. Students were provided with a quiz review sheet at the beginning of the period that included several terms and concepts that they were to know (e.g., Why did the Triple Entente join the war? Who assassinated Archduke Ferdinand?), but there was no discussion of those topics in class.

During our professional development session on March 13th, we began planning a collaborative lesson on the Treaty of Versailles by thinking about an end task in which students would need to generate their own ideas based on the texts they read. Alex and Leslie planned for students to first discuss with one another if they thought the Allies actually followed Wilson’s ideas that he stated in his 14 Points, and then they were to write a source-based response to the lesson question that included evidence from the texts. Following our collaborative development of this lesson, along with our follow-up meetings, future lessons developed by teachers always included an option for students to draw some type of conclusion from what they were studying. Each text-based activity
included a generative type of exercise that aligned to the argumentative standards of the state social studies frameworks.

During the March 26th professional development meeting, Leslie and Alex both shared that they were trying to provide students with some choices concerning drawing conclusions about topics they were studying in class. For example, following a whole-class viewing of the film *All Quiet on the Western Front*, teachers provided students with two options to consolidate their learning: (a) read three primary sources from the beginning, middle, and end of the war and compare those accounts to the account of the war depicted in the film, or (b) create a “doodle diary” with images that represent the various parts of the war along with a written reflection that references takeaways from the movie as well as other background information.

The teachers’ second class observations revealed clear opportunities for students to make meaning. For example, in her lesson on Stalin’s prison camps, Leslie asked students to complete a reflection prompt in which they wrote anonymous letters to the U.S. government detailing the brutality of the gulags. A corresponding rubric indicated that students were to “demonstrate a clear understanding of the topic by using specific evidence as support.” In Alex’s second class observation, students examined a set of sources about Stalin’s leadership. They ultimately wrote essays defending their responses to the lesson question by incorporating evidence from at least five to seven texts.

We continued to focus on meaning-making in subsequent professional development sessions through the development of additional lessons that allowed students to draw their own conclusions about content. For example, in a lesson on Hitler’s rise to power that teachers completed on April 24th, they designed an opportunity
for students to consolidate their learning based on their reading of self-selected texts from a text set. Students first worked in groups to categorize their evidence into affinity maps, and then they labeled overarching patterns that they observed from the evidence that they collected. Students created videos on the website Flipgrid in which they explained the justifications for their choices. Similarly, in the final collaborative lesson that teachers developed on the early events of the Cold War (finalized on May 22nd), students wrote argumentative responses to the question, “Was the division of Germany the correct response of the Allies after WWII?” after reading the documents in the text set. Students were expected to integrate at least two specific pieces of evidence into their responses. Alex used an identical lesson structure during his third observation, in which he prompted students to develop an evidence-based response to an argumentative question (i.e., “Was the use of Executive Order 9066 and the internment of Japanese-Americans the correct response by the United States government?”) based on their analysis of self-selected sources.

In their third interviews, Leslie and Alex both remarked that an emphasis on “making meaning” was allowing students to emerge with deeper understandings of course content. Leslie stated, “it’s nice to give students a big question and allow them to make sense of it. It makes learning more powerful for the students since they are studying what is meaningful to them.” Alex shared:

I realize now that I was really walking students through texts [before we studied the workshop model] rather than letting them figure things out. I am able to use a lot of the same sources as I did before, but the way in which I use them is different since I expect students to do more than just read them.
Figure 4.5 includes examples of ways in which teachers supported students in making meaning of content as the study progressed. In many cases, the strategies students used to create meaning also supported the development of literacy skills (e.g., crafting written responses, participating in discussions).

Student-centeredness. Student-centeredness refers to the degree to which teachers’ lessons allow students to work during uninterrupted segments of time. At the onset of the study, participants emphasized the importance of student engagement, but they did not provide opportunities for student-centeredness. By the conclusion of the study, teachers’ lessons were routinely student-centered, with minimal amounts of teacher-directed instruction.

Leslie’s initial comments about the student’s role in class were focused on task completion and compliance. For example, in her first interview, she commented:
I think it is the student’s role to contribute to whatever the activity is in class. In order to be a positive student, the student needs to do the work and take it seriously. They need to share their ideas since that will help them learn more.

Leslie added during the February 27th professional development meeting, “students need to learn how to listen to important information and write down key ideas.” Leslie’s first class observation included more passive types of activities for the learner (e.g., record notes on cloze passages as she lectured, record key ideas from video), although she did occasionally stop to engage students in whole-class discussion related to the topic.

Similarly, Alex shared comments related to general student engagement and effort during his first interview:

I want students to try—I guess put in an effort—I want them to be students who come prepared with questions and engages in the material. I don’t think the role of the student is to always get As, per se. It’s to try to be a part of the lesson, engage with it.

Alex’s first class observation also included mostly passive-learning activities (e.g., notetaking, lecture); however, after watching a video segment, students had the opportunity to share what they found important with their classmates. Overall, the lesson was primarily teacher-directed.

When teachers initially began planning instruction using a workshop model, they recognized that students now had opportunities to demonstrate independent thinking but sometimes struggled to initiate their work. They suggested that perhaps whole-class experiences could be supplemented with more student-directed work time. For example, Alex wrote during the March 22nd meeting, “Something I like about the workshop model
is that students are more engaged in the lessons since they actually have opportunities to
demonstrate their thinking.” Leslie echoed this thought during our meeting on March
26th when she wrote that a workshop approach “allows students to explore on their own
and dig deeper into the content.”

Initial lessons that incorporated primarily student-centered learning included
frequent opportunities for the teacher to “check-in” with the class to scaffold instruction,
as needed. For example, during the March 13th professional development meeting, when
teachers began developing the Treaty of Versailles lesson, they decided to break the work
time (when students analyzed the documents) into small segments to reinforce the skills
they were observing students using. Students would have a few minutes to examine and
annotate each document, and then the teachers would facilitate a whole-class discussion
for each one where all students could share their thinking. Similarly, during the March
22nd professional development meeting, teachers suggested that perhaps whole-class pre-
teaching and frontloading of content were also necessary prior to more extended periods
of work time for students.

Alex shared during his second interview that students were initially struggling
during the work time segment:

Students might struggle with not so much direct instruction, so the fact that we are
first modeling as class and then sending them to go and do leads a lot of kids to
struggle with that “do” segment. It’s hard for them to remain involved in the task.

Leslie suggested in her second interview that initial levels of discomfort were not
necessarily a bad thing: “Students need to work with texts and wrestle with them in order
for them to make sense. They need time to struggle, and I realize that the teacher needs to take a step back for them to think.”

Teachers’ second class observations offered extended periods of work time for students. For example, during Leslie’s observation, students were clustered in groups as they discussed primary source texts that they had previously read. After she suggested that the group focus on a specific idea in the text, she left students on their own to infer the meaning. Students proceeded to engage in a discussion about the text without teacher intervention:

S1: So, you got an individual punishment if you were involved in the activity, but then you also got the group punishment.

S2: So, people who weren’t involved might have even gotten punishments.

S1: They got individual and group punishments, both at the same time.

S2: So, would they all be in the same room?

Leslie noted in a professional development meeting warm-up on April 4th, “students are no longer waiting for me to give them the answers. They are starting to take more responsibility for their learning.” During Alex’s second observation, he provided about 5 minutes of whole-class modeling and then allowed students the next 10 minutes to examine texts on their own. During that time, he prompted students with questions (e.g., “So, what’s going on?” “What is Stalin doing here?” “The language changes—why might he do that?”). In Alex’s warm-up on April 4th, he noted that a challenge that he was facing was getting all students to engage in the whole-class sharing segments.

Instruction became increasingly student-centered as teachers planned workshop-based lessons more frequently. Both teachers stated that they were planning from a
student frame-of-reference rather than a teacher one, which ultimately allowed for students to feel more ownership in the learning process. During the May 2nd professional development meeting, Leslie wrote that she was starting to shift her thinking when planning: “I am thinking about what students are going to do, not what I am going to do.” She stated during our April 24th meeting, “for so long, students were told that they can’t work independently, so they don’t,” and that she was trying to build more independent experiences into her class.

In her third interview, Leslie reflected on her initial hesitation to shift her approach in teaching now that she realized how much more invested students were in their learning:

It is scary giving up control and changing the way you approach teaching, but I realize there is still a place for my own style using the workshop model. A lot of it was my fear of letting go, but I feel like students are learning more than when I was doing more direct teaching. Students are looking at more perspectives. I can tailor lessons based on what I am learning about my students—things I wouldn’t have known before.

In Alex’s third interview, he emphasized the increased relationship of trust that was built with his students due to his shift in teaching approach:

I feel that my role is to guide my students, but it is even beyond that. You are almost a team with the students because a relationship of trust is built when you give them the power to learn on their own.

Alex stated during our meeting on April 24th that he thought a workshop approach “is almost like a taste for the kids to wrap their heads around topics” rather than requiring
everyone to learn the same content, but he admitted that it is sometimes “difficult to step
away when you know the kids are challenged with rigorous texts.”

Both teachers’ final classroom observations were entirely student-centered in
nature. Leslie’s class was organized for a group-based activity. Although she frequently
checked in with each group, students were tasked with discussing scenarios with one
another in light of a speech that they had just read. In Alex’s class, students engaged in
different types of tasks concurrently depending on the documents they chose to examine
for the activity. For example, two students looked at a video together while another
student was reading a primary source individually and taking notes on an organizer.
When Alex checked in with one student about a source she was reading, she stated that
she found it on her own because it looked interesting. In both cases, students were
working on activities that allowed themselves—rather than the teacher—to direct their
learning.

Figure 4.6 summarizes the development of student-centeredness observed
throughout the study. While initial lessons were entirely teacher-centered, later lessons
incorporated multiple opportunities for student-driven learning. Clearly, some lessons
incorporated elements of both of these types; however, lessons planned at the end of the
study included more examples of student-centered opportunities than ones planned at the
beginning of the study.
Theme 3: Sustaining engagement through responsive instruction. Throughout the study, teachers considered the most effective ways to address students’ needs through classroom instruction. One technique that they began using was whole-class “catches” through which they were able to provide clarification or remediation for the entire class at once. A second technique that both teachers used was individual and small-group conferences. Both of these approaches helped teachers ensure that they were sustaining students’ engagement within their class. Table 4.4 depicts how participants used both of these techniques with their classes during the study. At the table indicates, both catches and student conferences can serve the same purposes; however, the former is responsive to the needs of the entire group while the latter is responsive to individual or small-group needs.

Table 4.4 Uses of Whole-Class “Catches” and Student Conferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole-Class “Catches”</th>
<th>Conferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Size</td>
<td>Whole-group</td>
<td>Individual or small-group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>1-2 minutes each</td>
<td>2-5 minutes each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposes</td>
<td>Clarify confusion, teach new strategies, reinforce content, build conceptual understandings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ongoing assessment with whole-class “catches.” Initially, teachers assessed students using whole-group methods that focused primarily on recall or comprehension of facts as well as student compliance. Throughout the study, they began to plan more deliberate assessment points within the lesson to assess students’ progression of the learning target.

In Leslie’s first interview, she shared that she primarily assessed for compliance, but that she did check for understanding through assessment, as well:

I want to make sure that if they are supposed to be reading and highlighting that they are doing it and that they are highlighting pertinent information, not just an entire text. When I am asking questions to the class, I look to see that everyone is in agreement with the answers and that nobody has puzzled looks on their faces. Sometimes I have done exit slips—I don’t do those a lot—but, in general, I ask students to summarize what they are learning instead of formally writing it out.

When we discussed some of the assessment components of the workshop model during our February 27th professional development session, Leslie raised some concerns with varying her typical approach, wondering if “other students might be drawn off task if they are not working directly with the teacher.” During Leslie’s first class observation, she primarily assessed for vocabulary knowledge (e.g., “Germany gave Austria a blank check. Do you know what that means when someone gives you a blank check?”) or for compliance with the task (e.g., “Are you getting that down?”)

In Alex’s first interview, he stated that he primarily assessed for recall and then for argumentation:
Did they understand what we have been doing and how it connects to what we are doing that day? Toward the end of a unit, I look at how they are answering bigger questions, like going more into cause and effect, using details in their responses, using accurate content.

During Alex’s first classroom observation, the assessment was primarily focused on vocabulary and recall: “We discussed the acronym MAIN to remember the causes of World War I. Do you remember what that acronym stood for?”, “What does it mean to annex something?”

As the study progressed, when we began exploring the “catch and release” component of workshops, the teachers began to use whole-class “catches” as assessment tools. To that end, as teachers walked around the room assessing individual students, they often brought the groups back together to address patterns they were observing. Although teachers still gauged content understanding and skill usage, their whole-class feedback was more responsive to the majority of the students’ needs.

Alex stated during our professional development meeting on March 22nd, “student assessment should reveal evidence of each individual’s skill or knowledge.” As we began to more fully explore how whole class “catches” could promote responsive instruction for the entire group, the teachers began to notice ways that they were providing more tailored feedback in class. For example, during our meeting on April 10th, Alex noted the following observation about how he was beginning to use catches in his class:

Several students stated that they were not sure what they should be highlighting, so I did a whole-class catch where I retaught what types of ideas students might
highlight. After that, I was able to follow-up with students who were still having difficulty. In my next lesson, I’m going to plan some whole-class catches in advance in areas where I know they might struggle.

Leslie shared a similar experience during the April 10th meeting:

I noticed that some students were having trouble finding the main ideas in the sources we were reading. I called everyone back together and asked one student to share how he interpreted one of the documents. Next, I asked the students who had trouble to go back to the document and highlight the evidence that supported that idea.

During Alex’s second interview, he shared how he was beginning to use catches more frequently in class:

The work period allows for meeting with kids who struggle and hopefully bringing them back in. They may just need the instructions or questions again, or for me to clarify something, but those informal discussions with students help me to see if several students are making the same mistake or being challenged in the same way. If that happens, I’ll do a catch with the class and bring them all back in. But ultimately, I want every student to be producing something written or verbal and being able to explain their thoughts and reasons.

During the May 15th professional development meeting, as we discussed what was currently working well in each teacher’s class, Alex shared: “I am better able to clarify content for students so that they can better evaluate and complete their work with individual analysis.”
Leslie also shared during the second interview that she was more frequently looking for how students were answering the questions related to the lessons under study. She stated, “Are students’ responses focused on the questions? If they aren’t, they possibly need some more direct teacher support.” In her third interview, Leslie added that she was also considering questions students, themselves, were asking during a lesson since those types of statements indicated what they knew and what confused them.

Several instances of a “catch and release” approach were evident during both teachers’ final classroom observations. During Alex’s class, he brought students together a few times to address patterns of confusion or to ensure comprehension. The catches were brief (no longer than a minute or two) and provided students with additional direction during the work time. In one catch, Alex clarified a strategy that students could use after observing some confusion:

If I can have your attention for a quick second, the “My Reactions” part can be a question. It doesn’t need to be a comment. I notice that a lot of you are asking what types of ideas you can put in that box.

Leslie initiated a similar whole-class catch during her third observation when she noticed that several students were not supporting their responses with evidence from the text:

As I was walking around, I noticed some of you had yes or no answers.

Remember, you want to explain what you meant. What are some of the feelings that you might have based on your perspective? I will give you about eight minutes and then we will regroup.

During another catch in Alex’s class, he asked students to share some examples of new learning with their classmates: “Let’s pause for a second and do a quick check-in. When
we began, you realized you knew a little bit about internment camps. Is this helping...What are we learning?” In both teachers’ classrooms, catches became opportunities for students to move closer toward the learning targets—not opportunities for the teachers to assess student compliance or activity completion.

**Individual and small-group conferences.** Teachers were initially apprehensive about engaging in conferences with students since they typically lead to extended conversations that are nearly impossible in teacher-centered classes. Thus, at the beginning of the study, typical assessment-based conversations with individual students were brief and primarily focused on monitoring learning when students were set out to work on their own. As the investigation progressed, both teachers began to incorporate conferring practices within their classes, and they tried to determine the most effective ways of meeting with all students in a timely manner. Teachers used both individual and small-group conferences as an ongoing assessment practice.

Initially, both teachers raised concerns about the time commitment required by conferences, particularly concerning implications for classroom management. For example, Alex stated in his first interview, “students who struggle to work independently will probably struggle with the workshop model, especially when they often need one-on-one support.” During the February 27th professional development session, Leslie also raised some concerns about conferring with students and maintaining their privacy: “How can we confer two-thirds of the time? How can we do it and not embarrass the students, or even keep the ones we are not conferring with focused in their work?”

As we began to explore strategies for conferring during our professional development sessions, teachers began to implement conferences in their classes. For
example, during Leslie’s second observation, she approached a student who was having difficulty understanding what she meant by the phrase “routines of execution” on an assignment handout. She engaged in a brief conference with the student to improve the student’s understanding of the text:

T: “So, what is a routine?”
S: “Well, when they carried out the execution.”
T: “When you talk about a routine in your own life, what might that mean?”
S: “Something I do every day.”
T: “So, when we look at the routine here, it’s not only something they follow. It’s something that happened on a daily basis, and they had a step by step plan for how to do it. What are some of the routines you see here then?”

The student began to list routines he identified in the text, and the teacher encouraged him to write those down on his organizer.

Similarly, Alex met with a student during his second class observation when she expressed difficulty in using a chart to answer a question:

S: “This document doesn’t tell me what happened; it’s telling me a target.”
T: “What might be another word for a target?”
S: “His goal.”
T: “So, what does that tell you about his leadership?”
S: “It’s telling me that he’s ambitious.”
T: “What types of information in the chart helps you conclude that he is ambitious?”
As with Leslie’s conference, Alex did not provide an answer to the student; he prompted her with some guiding questions to help her analyze the source, ultimately allowing her to draw a conclusion on her own.

Student conferences became a frequent discussion topic during our subsequent meetings, likely because it was an entirely new approach for both teachers to use in their classes. Although teachers shared the value of conferences in providing responsive instruction for individuals and small groups, they also continued to raise logistical concerns (e.g., “How can I confer with every student?”). Yet, they recognized that conferences allowed for timely feedback, and they were willing to try to find the most effective ways to use the approach in their own classes.

Alex noted during the May 2nd professional development meeting, “Conferences are needs-based. I adjust the purpose of the conference based on the needs the student presents.” During the May 9th meeting, he added, “students who may be reluctant to participate or engage during a class setting respond well to one-on-one.” During that same meeting, Leslie expressed that students were having some difficulty adjusting to conferences in class:

Usually, students think they are in trouble at first. I need to get rid of the idea that when the teacher comes to you, you are in trouble. Also, when do you stop talking to a student who usually doesn’t talk, and you are getting them to share their thinking? It’s hard to move on to the next kid when you are beginning to find out what they really know and don’t know.

In our subsequent meeting on May 15th, Leslie wondered if possibly paraprofessionals or co-teachers could assist with conferences in class. In both cases, Leslie and Alex
recognized the positive effects of conferences and were trying to find the best ways of embedding them into their classroom routines.

During the third classroom observation, the majority of each teacher’s lesson consisted of student work-time components, while teachers conferred with students or small groups. For example, Leslie engaged in both individual and small-group conferences with students during her class. In that process, she clarified student confusion and helped facilitate dialogue when students were having difficulty engaging in the task.

In the following excerpt from a conference with an individual student, Leslie probed a student who was having difficulty making a connection to a text:

T: “How’s it going? Okay?”
S: “I’m a little confused.”
T: “Which one are you stuck on?”
S: “I’m stuck on this.”
T: “Okay, so let’s read this excerpt from the text again.” (Leslie asked the student to read a paragraph aloud.)
T: “So, how would you feel about this based on your perspective?”

Once the student shared her thinking, the teacher asked her to expand upon that same idea in her response. In another conference with a small group, Leslie helped initiate dialogue with a group that was reluctant to begin sharing their ideas:

T: “So, who wants to start?”
S: “I am supposed to be a civilian.”
T: “What is your biggest concern as a civilian?” (Student shared thinking.)
T: “Your point of view might be different than another student’s point of view. Why might that be significant?”

Several group members then shared examples of how their interpretations of the text differed based on their perspectives. In both conferences, Leslie did not provide the “answers” to students or tell them how to think; instead, she helped support students from the perspective of a more experienced thinker of her content area.

Alex also facilitated both individual and small-group conferences during his third observation. His conferences focused on helping students engage in source analysis and building conceptual understanding. For example, the following excerpt from a conference with an individual student helped guide the student in reading an image closely:

T: “What is this document?”
S: “It’s a propaganda poster.”
T: “So, what is this teaching us about the U.S. reaction to Pearl Harbor?” (Student shared her thinking.)
T: “What are they telling you to do?” (Student responded.)
T: “So based on that, what is standing out here to you?”

Alex next engaged in another conference with a small group that also helped a set of students interpret a text:

T: “So, you guys seem stuck.”
S: “We can’t find the main idea.”
T: “Okay, what is the title? Does that give you any clues as to what this source is about?” (Students shared predictions.)
T: “Okay, now let’s look at the source again. What information in the source is helping to support that idea?”

In one additional individual conference, Alex helped a student develop his conceptual understanding of the topic by connecting the content from his class to what students were studying in their English class:

T: “What do you mean that they didn’t feel the impact of the bomb?”

S: “Since the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, they didn’t think it would change their minds.”

T: “Why not? Why didn’t they think it would bother them?”

S: “Maybe because they thought they were citizens of the U.S.”

T: “Excellent, and that is a key word here—citizens. They identified first as American citizens. How is this connecting to what you studied with dehumanization in English class?”

Clearly, Alex was still “teaching” his students during these conferences, but his instruction shifted from an approach through which all students were required to master the same content to one in which mastery was dependent upon the sources that students were choosing to examine in pursuit of the lesson question.

Analysis of Data Based on Research Questions

The themes identified in this chapter each support various facets of the research questions. Throughout the study, both participants’ perceptions and practices changed concerning how they set expectations, promoted engagement, and sustained engagement in their classrooms. The following section presents each research question with a summary of how each of the more specific subthemes is represented.
How do teachers’ perceptions related to the workshop model used within social studies classrooms change over time? Teachers initially perceived the workshop model to be similar to their existing instructional practices since they used several of its components in their day-to-day instruction. As the study progressed, teachers reported that the workshop model promoted engagement by allowing for greater student ownership over the learning process (student-centeredness). Teachers believed that the model supported an appropriate balance of teacher- and student-centered learning. Teachers reported at the end of the study that the workshop model had created more of a “team” atmosphere within their classrooms, ultimately contributing to a culture of trust between teachers and students (establishing a structure for learning). Although teachers believed that the planning process was time-consuming, they noticed that students were making deeper connections compared to when learning topics were primarily determined by the teacher in advance (making meaning).

How do teachers’ practices related to the workshop model used within social studies classrooms change over time? Initially, both teachers’ classes were primarily teacher-directed, with notetaking and whole-class discussion activities occurring during most of the instructional time. Once teachers began learning about the workshop model, they began to design more inquiry-based lessons that were guided by thought-provoking questions, included some sort of textual analysis (reading strategies), and provided students the opportunity to draw their own evidence-based conclusions (making meaning, student-centeredness). Teachers became more intentional in developing lessons that incorporated all elements of the workshop model, including an opening, mini-lesson, work time, and debrief (framing lessons). By the end of the study, teachers were
developing lessons that were framed around text sets. Students were empowered to select the sources to read that best supported their thinking related to the lesson questions (text choices). As teachers continued to plan lessons using the elements of the workshop model, they focused more exclusively on how whole-class “catches” and student conferences could make their instruction more responsive (ongoing assessment with whole-class “catches,” individual and small-group conferences). In their final observations, both teachers were using these strategies throughout their lessons.

**How do teachers’ perceptions of disciplinary literacy and the workshop model influence their classroom practices?** Throughout the study, teachers emphasized the importance of teaching several social studies-specific skills, including developing arguments, evaluating point of view, considering cause and effect, and analyzing historical sources. As teachers began to develop workshop-based lessons, disciplinary literacy skill development remained the focus of each one. Moreover, an emphasis on those skills reinforced teachers’ beliefs that their roles were to prepare students for life beyond high school, thus, creating a “need to know” for each lesson. Consequently, students were tasked with interpreting sources and ultimately generating evidence-based conclusions. Teachers’ assessments of students during work time (i.e., through whole-class catches or more individualized conferences) focused on students’ applications of skills or development of conceptual understandings.

**Summary**

Chapter 4 presented the findings for this study, along with an analysis of those findings concerning the significant themes that emerged. First, an overview of the study and intervention was provided. Next, a description of the general findings was presented, which were organized within the three major themes: setting expectations, promoting
engagement, and sustaining engagement through responsive instruction. Finally, an analysis of the data based on the three research questions was provided. Chapter 5 discusses the implications of the results of this study.
Chapter 5

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Overview of Study

Federal, state, and local initiatives have transformed the nature of social studies instruction over the past decade. With the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010), teachers within all content areas were charged with embedding literacy instruction into their daily lessons. More recently, the National Council for the Social Studies (2013, 2016) proposed that all social studies educators should approach the discipline from an inquiry-based lens in which students use such literacy skills to generate evidence-based conclusions and, when appropriate, take informed action outside of the classroom.

In an inquiry-based classroom, students are ideally the ones grappling with compelling questions, examining multiple sources of evidence, and sharing their findings with others (Grant et al., 2017). Yet, many social studies teachers prefer to use more traditional, teacher-centered practices in their own classrooms, ultimately resulting in students memorizing facts and regurgitating information (Moje, 2017). As the social studies instructional leader for a suburban public school district in New England, I am tasked with helping teachers within my own setting embrace more learner-oriented practices in their own classrooms to maximize student engagement.
A workshop model is one way for teachers to rethink their instructional approaches to provide students with increased opportunities to read, write, and discuss texts in class (Tovani, 2011). Although this approach is typically associated with traditional reading and writing instruction (e.g., Atwell, 1987), it draws from the broader constructivist perspective in which students derive their own understandings of concepts as a result of their individual experiences and mental processes (Dewey, 1938). To that end, I wondered if the use of a workshop model might help the high school social studies teachers in my district design literacy- and inquiry-based experiences in their own classes. Ultimately, I hoped that my work in this regard would improve local classroom practices while providing a framework that individuals in other settings could use for their own school improvement initiatives. I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do teachers’ perceptions related to the workshop model used within social studies classrooms change over time?
2. How do teachers’ practices related to the workshop model used within social studies classrooms change over time?
3. How do teachers’ perceptions of disciplinary literacy and the workshop model influence their classroom practices?

The study was conducted over 12 weeks from late February through May 2019 at a suburban high school in New England. Participants included two ninth-grade Modern World History teachers. Leslie, a veteran teacher, has 16 years of experience. She is willing to implement new strategies in her classroom and often volunteers to present her work to her colleagues. Alex has taught at the high school for six years and often
employs a hands-on, project-based approach in his classes. Although both teachers hold somewhat different instructional styles, they meet together regularly to collaborate. With that in mind, I organized our work within the study using a job-embedded professional development approach. Through job-embedded professional development, participants acquire new skills, and perhaps mindsets, that they immediately apply to their day-to-day work (Croft et al., 2010). Using that approach, I facilitated weekly professional development meetings with Leslie and Alex during which we explored the components of the workshop model and planned lessons that both teachers would implement in their classes.

Throughout the 12 weeks, I collected multiple sources of data that enabled me to answer the research questions, including minutes and artifacts from our professional development meetings, 3 classroom observations of each participant, lesson artifacts that I obtained during each observation, and 3 semi-structured interviews with each participant. I also maintained a researcher’s journal as a secondary source that enabled me to track my own initial interpretations of our collective work. At the conclusion of the study, evidence was analyzed using a constant comparative approach through which I used both open and axial coding to generate a set of themes and subthemes that reflected my research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Analysis of the data revealed three major themes: setting expectations, promoting engagement, and sustaining engagement through responsive instruction. Overall, teachers’ perceptions changed throughout the study from a mindset of “we already teach this way” to one in which they recognized that the systematic development and organization of workshop-based lessons enabled students to make deep connections to
the content. Thus, teachers’ practices evolved from the use of primarily lecture-based and teacher-centered lessons to more text-based and student-centered learning opportunities. Although both participants maintained the perception that their roles were to prepare students for life beyond high school, they began to use disciplinary literacy strategies as a method to support that goal.

**Results Related to Existing Literature**

Dewey (1916/2009, 1938) asserted that schools were essential to the promotion of citizenship and the development of students’ problem-solving skills. To that end, the inquiry-based nature of the lessons participants developed throughout this study reflected the broader constructivist paradigm as well as the recommendation of NCSS (2013) that learners regularly ask questions, examine texts, and communicate conclusions in class.

Yet, participants’ initial reliance on more teacher-directed instruction was not necessarily surprising. Teachers frequently instruct in the same ways in which they were taught, even if they state that they hold different beliefs about learning (Saxe, 1992; Hartzler-Miller, 2001). Brugar and Whitlock (2018) suggested that variances between teachers’ selections of strategies and their larger course goals might occur since their individual classroom approaches reflect their existing instructional repertoires. Thus, as Leslie and Alex learned new techniques that they had not previously encountered (e.g., use of text sets, conferring with students), they began to incorporate those new approaches in their own classrooms.

Participants’ development of several inquiry-based lessons supports Swan et al.’s (2018b) assertion that inquiry can be a part of routine classroom instruction when teachers strategically organize their classes around questions, tasks, and sources. For example, as Leslie and Alex planned collaborative lessons, they began to approach each
one around a compelling question, and they then selected literacy-based strategies that would support the exploration of that question. All lessons included some sort of reflection-based piece that allowed students to share their own points of view orally or in writing. Recognizing that it was not feasible merely to present students with a question and tell them to try to answer it, Leslie and Alex took a scaffolded instructional approach (e.g., Minigan et al., 2017) in which such inquiries often spanned multiple days that included opportunities for modeling and independent practice. Inquiry-based activities can help students explore social justice issues (Crowley & King, 2018), which Leslie and Alex approached from a historical context. For example, their collaborative lessons prompted students to consider the historical justifications of political actions (e.g., Treaty of Versailles, Soviet labor camps, post-World War II division of Germany) to determine what 21st-century citizens could learn from such events.

Throughout the study, both participants implemented both general and disciplinary literacy strategies to help students approach the inquiry-based tasks that they had developed (e.g., general strategies included setting a purpose for reading, using context clues to understand vocabulary, etc. while disciplinary strategies included evaluating sources, determining point-of-view, etc.). Moreover, by allowing students to consult a range of teacher-selected and self-selected texts, participants noted that students were more carefully examining arguments compared to when all students were required to read the same texts in class. These approaches support the existing research that suggests that student engagement will likely increase when the teacher approaches disciplinary literacy instruction by using student-friendly texts (Morgan & Wagner, 2013; Monte-Sano et al., 2014). Ultimately, when Leslie and Alex asked students to apply
specific strategies to understand texts, they did not simply assign the work and expect students to carry out the tasks on their own. Their use of literacy instruction was deliberate and aligned to helping students answer the more significant questions that framed their lessons. Damico et al. (2009) and De La Paz et al. (2014) posited that explicit literacy instruction is critical if teachers expect students to successfully apply those same skills independently.

Participants’ use of a workshop model to develop their lessons was consistent with the structure that is suggested in the literature (e.g., Bennett, 2007; Calkins, 2010; Tovani, 2011, 2017). For example, by the conclusion of the study, both Leslie and Alex were framing lessons around student-friendly learning targets, communicating those outcomes to students, providing short whole-class instruction segments and long individualized work segments, and ending each lesson with opportunities to debrief the new learning that occurred. Elements within this structure, such as student choice and use of conferences, were absent from early observations and lesson artifacts but commonplace by the end of the study. Most strikingly, both participants concluded that use of these new techniques improved their relationships with students and increased student engagement in their classes, supporting Gulla’s (2012) finding that workshops help develop classroom communities. Although Lubig (2006) speculated that workshops in social studies might produce these types of outcomes, this study extends that work since it focuses on the actual implementation of that approach with social studies teachers and students.

Use of a job-embedded professional development approach with participants initially revealed several of the issues that affect teachers’ perceptions and practices
concerning their work. For example, one’s own teaching philosophy and definition of rigor affect how the teacher approaches instruction (Brown & Hughes, 2018; Gibbs, 2017; Milner, 2014). When participants articulated their own beliefs about teaching and learning during the first professional development meeting, they both recognized the importance of student-centered learning but also emphasized the value of whole-class learning experiences. Similarly, early interviews with and observations of participants revealed that they both considered it their responsibility to advance students’ literacy development; however, such skills were not always emphasized in their classes. Massey and Heafner (2004) concluded that targeted professional development might help teachers better define their roles as instructors of literacy. Consequently, as the study progressed, both participants specifically identified the literacy skills that would be important for their students to ascertain, and they designed lessons that would introduce those skills to students.

Finally, research suggests that job-embedded professional development can improve teachers’ perceptions related to instructional approaches as well as their effectiveness in implementing new practices (Mette et al., 2016; Stewart & Houchens, 2014). Later interviews with both participants revealed positive feedback related to the use of the workshop model and confidence in using that approach in their own work, reinforcing Maass and Engeln’s (2018) finding that inquiry-based professional development can increase one’s instructional capacity. By incorporating regular instructional coaching into our professional development meetings (e.g., dedicated time to discuss issues and brainstorm solutions), participants were eager to share their successes and felt “safe” in admitting when problems did arise. Since professional
development that includes targeted feedback can foster participants’ self-efficacy (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2012; Snyder et al., 2015), it was important for the teachers to have regular dedicated times to grapple with issues that were concerning them.

**Practice Recommendations**

Since the use of action research typically allows organizational insiders to improve upon existing practices within that organization (Herr & Anderson, 2015), the work conducted within this study directly informs my own day-to-day work as a social studies instructional leader. Mertler (2017) posited that action researchers should develop action plans based on the results of their studies that may be implemented at the individual, team, school, or district levels. With that in mind, my collaboration with two ninth-grade teachers throughout this study will influence my future work with the other teachers and grade-level teams that I supervise.

Action research studies are typically cyclical in that they begin with research questions and often end with additional questions or new cycles of research (Efron & Ravid, 2013). As a practitioner, myself, I immediately recognized that such uncertainty would feel intimidating to teachers who found comfort in their “tried and true” methods (Curry & Cherner, 2016). Consequently, I learned that it was my responsibility to nurture a safe environment in which participants were comfortable sharing their struggles as they implemented new practices. Knowing that teachers’ own performance, and emergence as leaders, could develop through structured exercises (Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007), I facilitated many of our professional development meetings using protocols that supported reflective thinking. To that end, I continue to meet with Leslie and Alex regularly in order to sustain and extend their efforts to incorporate the workshop model in their
classes. In the current school year, I plan for our team to meet once per month to continue our formal professional development sessions; however, informal meetings and collaborative sessions continue to happen at least once per week. Since effective reflection underpins good teaching, I plan to establish a similar meeting schedule with other grade-level teams in which those teachers will be able to consider their work more deeply using the structures we established throughout this study. Currently, all social studies teachers at both the middle and high schools in my district have common planning periods, so I plan to meet with each team once per month during those times over the course of the school year.

As an administrator, my work with two teacher-participants also helped me to reflect upon my own leadership style as well as the implications for my broader work with the social studies faculty. Avolio and Yammarino (2013) promoted a transformational leadership perspective through which leaders should inspire followers to develop an emotional attachment to their work so that all individuals want to contribute to a common cause. Such an approach can allow me to support others while promoting growth for both individual teachers and my school as a whole. Northouse (2016) added that transformational leaders not only possess a clear vision, but they can influence others to embrace it as well. As a leader, it is my responsibility to tap into teachers’ strengths to empower them to fulfill that vision. When individuals see how their own work contributes to the goals of the group, it elevates the importance of the tasks at hand and helps inspire a shared commitment to improvement (Northouse, 2016).

Yaslioglu and SelenayErden (2018) found that true transformational leaders move beyond inspiration through speeches or words alone. They actively involve individuals in
the work so that there is a shared sense of power and a collective mission to improve. It is up to the leader to keep people’s spirits high, even when the work becomes difficult or seemingly impossible. It is sometimes easy to lose sight of this when faced with time-sensitive assignments, stressful work situations, or unplanned obstacles. A transformational leader, however, will keep the followers’ needs—rather than the leader’s own interests—at the forefront of his or her work (Northouse, 2016). With such an approach, negativity should be minimized as all individuals work toward common goals.

It is critical to provide teachers with ongoing support when they are tasked with incorporating new instructional routines in their classrooms (Thacker & Friedman, 2017). Therefore, as I continue to work with additional teachers, I must establish processes to regularly evaluate any concerns and questions that arise related to their own professional learning. Throughout the current study, I began most meetings with the two participants by asking them what was working well in their classrooms and what challenges they were facing at that time. Consequently, we were able to collectively brainstorm possible solutions to any barriers that arose, including the need for new instructional materials or strategies that would support our work. Moving forward, using such “check-in” prompts with teachers at the start of our meetings will allow me to tailor our meetings to their current needs, which is a necessary component of job-embedded professional development (Croft et al., 2010).

Since an intended outcome of transformational leadership is the development of new leaders (Northouse, 2016), I plan to recruit the ninth-grade teacher-participants from this study as facilitators who will replicate the same job-embedded professional development process with other grade levels. To that end, in the current school year, I
plan to invite one participant to help me co-facilitate each monthly grade-level meeting at the high school. Similarly, I will encourage both teachers to present professional development sessions related to their implementation of the workshop model during our district-level professional development days, where teachers from other schools can attend and learn about their work.

On five days this year, the middle and high school teachers are scheduled to meet to examine student achievement data for the purpose of curriculum improvement. Prior to each meeting, I will encourage all teachers to seek feedback from their own students so we can gather anecdotal data related to students’ perceptions of teaching and learning in social studies classes. I can then use the achievement and perception-based data gleaned from these meetings when I represent my subject area during district-level data team meetings. The possible effects of this work are exciting: students will receive high-quality instruction, teachers will feel empowered, and we will all share a common commitment to improving our practice through a process of collaborative inquiry.

Although action research is not meant to be generalizable to larger populations, the process can be transferable to other contexts (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Thus, social studies leaders from other districts might customize the weekly professional development plan used in this study to suit their own exploration of the three research questions. Although the work products that teachers create, as well as the nature of the weekly discussions, will differ based on site-based factors, the “content” of the professional development sessions (e.g., exploring the components of the workshop model, using text sets, conferring with students) reflects the successful implementation of workshops in any
setting or subject area. Consequently, this work might be useful for any content area leader at the secondary level.

**Limitations and Suggestions**

Since the study was conducted with two participants, the small sample size presents a limitation in terms of the usefulness of its results beyond the local context. Although purposeful sampling was appropriate given the focus on one specific grade level, it might be helpful for future researchers to expand the study to a broader audience of practitioners within their own settings. In this case, both participants were initially open to learning about new strategies and voluntarily agreed to participate in the professional development sessions during their own time. Selecting a more extensive sample might include a greater variety of perspectives concerning the strategies under consideration.

An additional limitation is that my own bias toward a workshop model of instruction might have influenced my interpretations of the data. Although I used multiple data sources to analyze each research question, the results of any qualitative research study are subject to the researcher’s own positionality (Lapadat et al., 2005). Using a larger sample size, future researchers might prefer to incorporate a mixed-methods approach that includes quantitative types of evidence, including survey data (to track teachers’ perceptions) and observation checklists (to track instances of specific components of the workshop model in use).

Finally, this study was conducted over a 12-week period, which represents one-third of a school year. Future researchers might prefer to extend the data collection period to gather evidence over a more extended scope of time. Teachers’ perceptions and
practices do not change easily (Maass & Engeln, 2018); therefore, this process must occur at a pace that will allow participants to feel comfortable with change.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Since few studies exist that focus on the use workshop model in a social studies context, additional studies in that regard will enrich the knowledge base surrounding this topic. Although this study focused on teachers’ perceptions and practices using this approach, future studies that explore students’ perceptions, engagement, and achievement can provide a clearer picture of the usefulness of workshops in secondary social studies classes.

An additional recommendation for future researchers is to incorporate opportunities for students to take informed action through workshop-based learning. Throughout this study, teachers prompted students to consider and evaluate several social justice issues, but the students did not have the opportunity to extend that learning beyond the classroom walls. Since social studies classrooms can serve as platforms for students to explore themselves and their communities (Milner, 2014), researchers might wish to explore how the workshop model can provide a structure for those experiences.

**Summary**

The action research process was challenging and rewarding since it required both the participants and me to deeply examine our perceptions and practices related to social studies instruction. Through that process, we learned that a job-embedded professional development approach was a valuable way to establish collegiality, experiment with new strategies in a safe environment, and consistently reflect upon what worked and what did not work. In that sense, I grew as an instructional leader and professional development facilitator, while the two participants expanded their perspectives and instructional
repertoires. Consequently, we will move forward in our own setting by replicating the professional development experience with a larger group of social studies educators.

Social studies is a critical subject area since its primary purpose is to promote active and informed citizens. To that end, students must develop the skills that will enable them to be successful problem solvers, effective communicators, and critical readers.

Active learning environments that support student-centered experiences and literacy development are necessary if we wish for students to apply such learning beyond the classroom. Although the workshop model is by no means a new approach, its potential usefulness for promoting authentic learning in social studies is promising.
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Appendix A: Interview Guide

The following guide includes prompts for the three semi-structured interviews that were conducted over the duration of the study.

1. Describe a typical day in your class.
2. Tell me how you go about planning a lesson.
3. What do you know about a workshop model of instruction?
4. What do you feel are the strengths and weaknesses of a workshop model versus a traditional instructional approach?
5. How would you define disciplinary literacy?
6. What is your opinion about integrating literacy into social studies instruction?
7. How do you incorporate inquiry-based practices into your class?
8. How do you decide which materials or texts to use with your students?
9. What do you look for when you assess your students during a lesson?
10. How do you feel about students having choices over what they learn in class?
11. What do you think is your role in the classroom?
12. What do you think is the role of your students in the classroom?
13. Tell me about your most memorable professional development experience.
   (Interview 1)
14. Has your opinion of the workshop model changed over the course of the study? (Interviews 2 and 3)
Appendix B: Professional Development Meeting Agendas

Meeting Date: February 27, 2019

Learning Targets:
- I can identify the components of the workshop model.
- I can articulate how my core beliefs about teaching and learning can “fit” within a workshop structure.

Agenda:
- Check-in
  - Discuss purpose of professional development meetings
- Identify our core beliefs about teaching and learning
- Watch video overview of workshop model
  - Record and discuss key ideas and reactions
  - Review workshop “pie chart” and discuss components
- Homework: Over the next week, think about how you are using the different components of the workshop model in your own lesson design

Meeting Date: March 7, 2019

Learning Targets:
- I can analyze how a sample lesson plan aligns with my own views of the workshop model.
- I can brainstorm ways that an upcoming lesson can be designed using the workshop model.

Agenda:
- Check-in discussion
  - What was your most memorable experience as a student?
  - What left you thinking after our last meeting?
  - Share something that has worked well in your class recently.
- Review of last session (what we value, elements of workshops, “pie chart”)
- Examine a sample workshop lesson using the Four “A”s Text Protocol
- Future lesson brainstorming (Treaty of Versailles)
Meeting Date: March 13, 2019

Learning Target:
- I can design an upcoming lesson that includes all of the components of the workshop model.

Agenda:
- Check-in discussion
  - Over the past week, have there been any lessons that you taught that have included elements of the workshop model?
- Continue to develop Treaty of Versailles lesson
  - Finalize compelling question, learning targets/outcomes, assessment
  - Develop mini-lesson
  - Begin finding sources
- Debrief

Meeting Date: March 22, 2019

Learning Target:
- I can design an upcoming lesson that includes all of the components of the workshop model.

Agenda:
- Check-in discussion
  - What has been going well in your class?
- Review Treaty of Versailles lesson/make final revisions
- Debrief: Exit Slip
  - Something that I like about the workshop model is…
  - Something that I think might be challenging about the workshop model is…
  - Something that I didn’t previously think of related to the workshop model is…
  - One final thought I have is...

Meeting Date: March 26, 2019

Learning Target:
- I can examine how the use of choice-based texts can support student engagement in a social studies lesson.

Agenda:
- Check-in
  - What are some ways that you provide students with choices in your class?
- Read about text sets:
  https://iowacore.gov/sites/default/files/guidetocreatetextsets.pdf
Text Rendering Protocol - Identify a sentence, phrase, and word from the text that you think are most important to our work.
- After our discussion: What are some new insights that you have about text sets? How might they be able to be used within a social studies classroom?
  - Begin planning future lesson that incorporates the use of a text set (Hitler’s rise to power)

**Meeting Date: April 4, 2019**

**Learning Target:**
- I can curate a variety of texts that support student examination of an upcoming topic in MWH.

**Agenda:**
- Check-in (warm-up slip)
  - What has gone well with your lessons?
  - What has not gone well with your lessons?
  - What strategies can we use to improve areas that are not going well?
- Research texts related to Hitler
  - Finalize anchor text and compelling question
  - Locate 8-10 texts

**Meeting Date: April 10, 2019**

**Learning Target:**
- I can curate a variety of texts that support student examination of an upcoming topic in MWH.

**Agenda:**
- Check-in
  - How did the Treaty of Versailles lesson go?
- Finish compiling texts for rise of Hitler lesson
  - Discuss instructional implementation of lesson

**Meeting Date: April 24, 2019**

**Learning Target:**
- I can finalize our lesson on Hitler’s rise to power by solidifying text choices and student activities.

**Agenda:**
- Check-in (warm-up slip)
  - What is going well?
  - What is not going well?
  - What strategies can we use to improve what’s not going well?
- Finalize lesson on Hitler’s rise to power (texts, activities, and handouts)
Meeting Date: May 2, 2019

Learning Target:
- I can examine how conferring with students can allow for more tailored feedback during lessons.

Agenda:
- Check-in discussion
  - How is it going?
- Read/discuss the article “Feedback Is a Two-Way Street”
  - Record observations of thinking
- Watch video clips from Cris Tovani’s “Talk to Me” and discuss implications for classroom practice
  - Record observation notes and reactions
  - What are your thoughts during the “Cris Talks” segment (benefits of conferring, implications for my own classroom, etc.)?
- Homework: Confer with students over the next week and be ready to share!

Meeting Date: May 9, 2019

Learning Target:
- I can develop a plan for conferring with students in an upcoming workshop-structured lesson.

Agenda:
- Check-in (warm-up slip)
  - How did your initial conferences go?
  - What comments do you have about conferring with students at this time (positive or negative)?
    - What questions do you have about conferring with students at this time?
- View reading conference with Penny Kittle and analyze script
- Begin planning a possible lesson that includes opportunities for conferring with students (early events of the Cold War)
- Homework: Continue to confer with students over the next week and be ready to share!

Meeting Date: May 15, 2019

Learning Target:
- I can develop a plan for conferring with students in an upcoming workshop-structured lesson.

Agenda:
- Check-in (warm-up slip)
  - How are your conferences going?
What comments do you have about conferring with students at this point (positive or negative)?
What questions do you have about conferring with students at this time?
- Continue planning a lesson that includes opportunities for conferring with students
  - Select anchor text
  - Begin compiling sources
- Homework: Continue to confer with students over the next week and be ready to share!

Meeting Date: May 22, 2019

Learning Target:
- I can finalize a workshop-structured lesson related to the post-WWII division of Germany.

Agenda:
- Check-in
- Finish lesson
  - Finish compiling sources and finalizing handouts
- Final thoughts?
Appendix C: Treaty of Versailles Lesson

Modern World History
Was the Treaty of Versailles an effective agreement for keeping world peace?

Learning Targets
● I can extract evidence from texts that reflect the differing perspectives of nations at the end of the war.
● I can produce an evidence-based argument that addresses the compelling question.

Opening Activity
Examine the pictures posted on the screen and then work with a partner to determine the possible goals of the European countries versus the goals of the United States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals of European countries</th>
<th>Goals of the United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Do you think the European countries and the United States would have any common goals?

Work Time
Highlight/annotate the texts from the DBQ packet as you consider how the treaty might impact the relationship among the nations involved in the war. Use the strategies that we practiced with the first document.

Drawing Conclusions
Was the Treaty of Versailles an effective agreement for keeping world peace?
Use evidence from the documents to support your response.
## Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Beginning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2-0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Sophisticated use/integration of accurate evidence to support argument.**
  - Exemplary: Sophisticated use/integration of accurate evidence to support argument.
  - Proficient: Sufficient use/integration of accurate evidence to support argument.
  - Developing: Limited use/integration of evidence to support argument. Some evidence may be inaccurate.
  - Beginning: Missing or inaccurate use of evidence.

- **Sophisticated use of grammar and free from spelling errors. Parenthetical citations are in correct MLA format. (Article #___, Document #___)**
  - Exemplary: Sophisticated use of grammar and free from spelling errors. Parenthetical citations are in correct MLA format.
  - Proficient: Appropriate grammar and free from spelling errors. Parenthetical citations are in correct MLA format, but there may be some minor errors.
  - Developing: Minor grammar issues and some spelling errors. Parenthetical citations include several formatting errors according to MLA style.
  - Beginning: Several grammar issues and spelling errors. Parenthetical citations are absent or do not follow MLA style.
Appendix D: Understanding Nazi Germany Lesson

How was Hitler able to convince a nation to support his vision for a new German empire?

Part I: Building Background (Anchor Texts):
Use the following texts to complete the organizer about conditions in Germany after World War I. These readings will help you identify the factors that led to the rise of the Nazi Party as well as the party’s goals.

- Prentice Hall World History: The Modern Era (pp. 550-552)
- Excerpts from “The 25 Points of the Nazi Party”

Part II: Exploring Hitler’s Leadership (Text Set):
Below is a set of texts that will help you gain a better understanding of the methods Hitler used to convince the German people to support his vision. Choose five to seven texts to read on your own. As you read, find specific pieces of evidence to answer the question. Record one example/idea on each Post-it note.

“How Did Hitler Rise to Power?” TED-Ed Video

Nazi Germany Articles on the History Learning Site

Article about propaganda (U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum)
“‘The Coal Thief’ Propaganda Poster
“‘Children, What Do You Know About Our Leader’ Poster
“‘Healthy Parents, Healthy Children’”

Hitler’s Rise and Fall (Timeline)

“How Did Hitler Rise to Power?” TED-Ed Video

Melita Maschmann became a supporter of the Nazi Party
Story of a young girl and why she joined the Nazi Party
Part III: Putting Everything Together

1. In a group, put all of your Post-it notes on a piece of chart paper.
2. Group your post-its according to common ideas. You can create subgroups, too (groups within larger groups).
3. Label your groups.
4. Title your chart.
5. As a group, record a Flipgrid video in which you explain your categories and the reasoning behind them. The link to create your Flipgrid video will be in Google Classroom.
Appendix E: Division of Postwar Germany Lesson

Was the division of Germany the correct response of the Allies after World War II?

Part I: Building Background (Anchor Text):
Use the following text to determine the goals of the Allies following World War II. Complete the first two boxes on the organizer.

Yalta Conference Dialogue

Part II: Exploring the Allies’ Postwar Actions (Text Set):
Below is a set of texts that will help you gain a better understanding of the postwar actions of the Allied powers. As you read each text,

Below is a set of texts that will help you gain a better understanding of the methods Hitler used to convince the German people to support his vision. Choose four or five texts to read on your own and complete the accompanying organizer.

1. BBC: “What Happened to Germany After the War?”
2. The Cold War in Berlin (including JFK’s “Let them Come to Berlin” speech)
3. The Berlin Airlift (from the U.S. Office of the Historian)
4. Germany after WWII: A brief video detailing the conditions in Germany
5. Economic Effects of the East-West German Division (includes maps, challenging)
6. “Growing Up in East Germany: Reflections 20 Years Later”
7. Timeline: East Germany—From Wartime Ashes to Unity
8. Postwar Germany
10. Division of Postwar Germany After WWII
Part III: Putting Everything Together
Answer the following question after reviewing the sources in the text set. Be sure to use at least two specific pieces of evidence and details.

Student Handout

Was the division of Germany the correct response of the Allies after World War II?

Part I: Building Background (Anchor Text):

What might the Allies want in a peace treaty at the end of World War II? Be sure to identify specific countries along with their goals.

Read the skit of the events of the Yalta Conference.

What postwar goals did all three countries agree upon?

In what ways did the countries disagree at the conference?
Part II: Exploring the Allies’ Postwar Actions (Text Set):
Review 4-5 sources and complete the following table below based on your analysis of each one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Title</th>
<th>Main Idea</th>
<th>My Reaction</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part III: Putting Everything Together
Answer the following question after reviewing the sources in the text set. Be sure to use at least two specific pieces of evidence and details.