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TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE PURPOSES OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Throughout the relatively short history of American social studies education, its purposes have shifted in response to social and educational changes. The contest for the American social studies curriculum has continued since its inception, influenced by various stakeholders and educational theorists. Given widespread socio-political turbulence, particularly in the years following the 2016 election, this dissertation takes place at an opportune time to revisit the purposes of social studies.

This dissertation explores the perceptions of 21 pre-service and in-service teachers and asks the question, "how do teachers perceive the purposes of social studies education?" To approach this question I adopted a constructivist grounded theory methodology. I conducted 21 interviews and allowed theory to emerge from the data to answer two sub-research questions: "How do pre-service and in-service teachers perceive the purposes of social studies education?", and "How do teachers make sense of complex internal and external pressures and relate to the purposes of social studies education?"

Several notable findings emerged from the results. I found teachers adhered to no singular, unifying purpose of social studies education. I argue for a fluid approach to purpose that allows for greater teacher professionalism and autonomy. When faced with pressures such as state policy, teachers exhibited varying degrees of resistance and prioritized their autonomy and the needs of their students. Teachers that resisted state policy were most commonly experienced in-service teachers. Notably, teachers perceived a debate between the importance of skills versus content in social studies education which I framed within existing educational sociology debates on the various dichotomies underpinning educational purpose; between neoconservatism and

postmodernism, between instrumentalism and intrinsic meaning, between top-down policy and bottom-up context-driven instruction, between teacher alienation and self-actualization. The majority of teachers believed that developing specific social studies related skills was more important than content knowledge which highlighted a trend away from the intrinsic value of social studies knowledge and towards the instrumentalization of education. Social studies was increasingly defined by its utility. Finally, teachers noted the changing ontology of teaching itself given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and rapid technological change.

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Finally, for my grandparents, some of whom I lost throughout this process. You taught me to love the world and pushed my curiosity from my earliest memories.

Wrth fynd am dro drwy'r glennydd teg a'r dolydd,
a gwrando cân yr adar yn y gwŷdd,
a bwrw trem o gopa uchel fynydd
yn sŵn y nant neu falm yr awel rydd

Cân f'enaid, cân, fy Arglwydd Dduw, i ti,
mor fawr wyt ti, mor fawr wyt ti;
cân f'enaid, cân, fy Arglwydd Dduw, i ti,
mor fawr wyt ti, mor fawr wyt ti.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Social Studies in a Changing World

Throughout its short history, social studies education has developed its purposes in conversation with social and educational change (Lybarger, 1981; Ravitch, 2003; Young, 1972). Most recently, the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) defined the purpose of social studies as "to help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world" (National Council for the Social Studies, 1994, p. 3). This aim has not changed in nearly 30 years.

In the meantime, education across all grade levels and in post-secondary education has seen an increased focus on Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM). A symbiotic relationship between education and the economy has, among other things, contributed to a declining emphasis on social studies (Ross et al., 2014; Ross & Gibson, 2007; Ross & Vinson, 2014). High-stakes testing, reduced instructional time (particularly at the elementary level) and the introduction of the common-core have led to a drastic reframing of social studies education (National Council for the Social Studies, n.d.-a). Consequently, social studies has seen falling enrollments in higher-education and holds less stock in the eyes of prospective students and parents (Meadows, 2018). Recent plans to invest $1 billion dollars in civics education come on the back of the massive political fallout at the end of the Trump administration and the transfer of power to the Biden administration, and signal a reinvigorated interest in the importance of social studies education (Heim, 2021; Inskeep, 2021).

Historically, social studies has seen a number of competing purposes from religious instruction to national pride and civic duty. States adopt policies that reflect the current global and national moment as well as their own cultural intricacies, and are recommended to do so in

line with the NCSS *National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (National Council for the Social Studies, n.d.-b). In 2018 Massachusetts passed the revised *History and Social Science Curriculum Frameworks*, citing a particular focus on civics, diverse perspectives, financial and media literacy, and encouraged a practical approach that aligned with literacy standards and inquiry methods (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, p. 3). The Massachusetts frameworks described the purpose of social studies as a "Renewed Mission: Education for Civic Life in a Democracy" (National Council for the Social Studies, 2014b). The aim of the standards therefore, was to "prepare students to have the knowledge and skills to become thoughtful and active participants in a democratic society and a complex world" (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, p. 12).

However, society is constantly changing and 2020 brought with it immeasurable challenges. A global pandemic forced businesses and the multi-billion dollar education industry online overnight and generations of individuals were confronted with the existential threat of death on a mass scale. As of September 2020, just under 1 million people had died worldwide including 200,000 in the United States alone (Johns Hopkins University and Medicine, 2020), by April 2021 this had risen to 560,000 deaths in the United States and 2.9 million worldwide (The New York Times, 2021b, 2021a). In 2022 this figure stood at just under 6 million deaths worldwide, just under 1 million in the United States, and over 23,000 in Massachusetts alone (Johns Hopkins University and Medicine, 2022; The New York Times, 2022).

2020 also ushered in a fierce presidential election in a divided nation. While bloodthirsty election campaigns are not unique in American politics, the Trump vs. Biden, left vs. right debate played to a backdrop of increasing partisanship and political zeal exacerbated by social media, online echo chambers and the intentional narrowing of thought and opinion (Bishop & Cushing,

2009; D. French, 2020). The Black Lives Matter movement, founded after the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's killer in 2013, experienced a surge in support and controversy following the deaths of (among others) Breonna Taylor and George Floyd in early 2020. Over half a million protestors campaigned across 550 cities in a single day in support of Black Lives Matter, some of which descended into violence and looting; further antagonized by political confrontations from both parties (Buchanan et al., 2020). 2020 presented the social studies teacher with extraordinary challenges. Some recent projects have proposed pathways to reconsider the importance of democratic citizenship in light of recent events. The "Educating for American Democracy" initiative, a collaborative effort from Harvard University, Tufts University, CIRCLE, and Arizona State University, for example, has proposed roadmaps to democratic success aimed at teachers, policymakers and curriculum designers that want to "rethink and reprioritize" curriculum design based around physical and social contexts (Educating for American Democracy, 2021a). Although such initiatives rely heavily on buy-in within existing social studies structures, the massive scale of investment brings with it tremendous potential for successful civics education. With the public eye turned once again on social studies education we are at an opportune time to redress the purpose of social studies education.

The Problem

Mapping the Development of Social Studies Education

Literature that charts the development of purpose in social studies education highlights the messiness of a field pulled in a number of directions by a variety of stakeholders. Social studies has existed as a formal curricular discipline since the early part of the twentieth century (Hertzberg, 1981; Kliebard, 2004; Lybarger, 1981; Ravitch, 2003; Ross, 2014; Tryon, 1935). Prior to this, social studies existed to varying degrees in its constituent social-science subjects

such as history, civics and government, and religious instruction (Hertzberg, 1981; Ross, 2014). American and European history education predominantly served the purpose of reinforcing Protestant and Eurocentric ideologies (Kaestle, 1983; Lagemann, 2000; T. L. Smith, 1967), and for "making patriots rather than for the purpose of portraying the truth" (Tryon, 1935, p. 78).

Following the turn of the century, a steady focus on history education gave way to the diversification of social science subjects during a period of uncertain evolution and, through various committees, commissions and reports, this resulted in formalization of "social studies" education (Hertzberg, 1981; Tryon, 1935). Changes in theory building, the interpretive turn and a rise in constructivism in educational thought altered the purpose of social studies education accordingly (Kliebard, 2004; Lybarger, 1981). Religiously-motivated ideologies gave way to competing purposes in line with broader educational thought such as social efficiency (Bobbitt, 1918; Hertzberg, 1981; Kliebard, 2004), citizenship education (Beard, 1934; Dewey, 1916; Hertzberg, 1981), social meliorism or reconstructionism (Kilpatrick, 1918; Kliebard, 2004; Rugg, 1921b, 1921a, 1972) and social control (Feinberg & Rosemont, 1975; Franklin, 1974). Reports and commissions advocated for various conceptualizations of the purpose of social studies education most commonly espousing the importance of creating functioning, well-informed citizens (Hertzberg, 1981).

It appears that, as Lybarger (1981), Apple (in Lybarger, 1981), and Young (1972) claimed, "early social studies ideas were the property of particular social groups for whom they served to legitimate prevailing social and political arrangements" (Lybarger, 1981, p. 27). The ebb and flow of each of these purposes for social studies education varied in relationship with the current social moment (Ravitch, 2003). Following the end of the Second World War came the rise of the accountability era, high-stakes testing and increased global competition added further

complexities to the purposes of social studies (Hertzberg, 1981; Ross et al., 2014; Westheimer, 2014). Still, history education remains the dominant content-focus of social studies education but there exists a heavy emphasis on civics and government (Hertzberg, 1981; Lybarger, 1981; Ravitch, 1985, 1989, 2003).

Given that social studies education reacts to contemporary social and educational moments, its purposes have evolved accordingly (Lybarger, 1981; Ravitch, 2003; Young, 1972). Recent attempts to conceptualize the purpose of social studies education outline a variety of models that categorize and sort purposes into clearly defined areas. Barr et al. (1977) delineated social studies for the purpose of developing citizens into "Citizenship Transmission," "Social Studies Taught as Social Science" and "Reflective Inquiry" (pp. 18-19). Martorella (1996) later abridged Barr et al.'s list, to include "informed social criticism" and "personal development." Ravitch (1985, 1989) argued for a citizenship education rooted in chronological history, whereas Saxe (1997) suggested that disciplines such as history or geography do little to promote citizenship education. For Levinson, (2014) social studies is only successful in realizing a citizenship-focused purpose when implemented through action. Recently, Epstein (2010) has again attempted to reconceptualize the field by grouping the purpose of history education according to four perspectives: "Nationalist," "Disciplinary," "Participatory Democratic," and "Critical" (pp. 12-14).

Different Levels, Different Purposes: State Responses

Social studies is inextricably linked to society across all levels, from local to global. There exists, therefore, tremendous differences between the realization of purpose across all levels of education from policy to the individual student (Thornton, 2005). At the policy level, states have adapted standards and frameworks to meet their desired purposes and contexts. This

is possible given the lack of national oversight and curricula, and no nationally mandated testing in the field of social studies (Williams & Maloyed, 2013). States such as Texas have been heavily criticized for a conservative approach to content matter, including a deracialized and partisan political undercurrent (Blanchette, 2010; Goldstein, 2020; McKinley Jr, 2010; Strunc, 2017). Michigan suffered similar criticism for removing references to *Roe vs. Wade*, climate change and sexuality from their reformed standards between 2015 and 2018, only to reinstate them in a later draft (R. French & VanHulle, 2018; Wisley, 2019). Explicit adherence to the purposes of social studies differ from state to state, although there is some overlap due to the Common Core State Standards and common usage of the most popular textbooks. While there exists no federal oversight, President Trump in September 2020 proposed the "1776 commission," a direct opposition to the *New York Times*' "1619 Project" that designed a revisionist and critical approach to history education. Trump argued that a "1776 commission" curriculum would "promote patriotic education" in contrast to the leftist propaganda he saw as plaguing current history education (Crowley, 2020).

Context

The state of Massachusetts has voted Democrat since Reagan in 1984. In 2016, 60% of voters supported Hillary Clinton, making it the fourth most blue-voting state by percentage in the United States (The Cook Political Report, 2016). In the 2020 election, 65.6% of voters supported President Biden, making it the third most democrat-aligned state (Federal Election Commission, 2021). The city of Boston, state capital of Massachusetts, is a liberal stronghold and ranked the fifth most liberal city in America according to Tausanovitch and Warshaw (2014). The governor of Massachusetts, Charlie Baker, is widely renowned as one of the most progressive republican governors in the United States.

The education system in Massachusetts is often seen as one of the strongest, if not the strongest, in the nation (Amadeo, 2020; U.S. News, n.d.). According to the National Assessment for Educational Performance (NAEP) "Nation's Report Card" Massachusetts consistently ranks first for 4th, 8th and 12th grade reading and mathematics, apart from 12th grade reading and 4th grade math where it ranked third and second respectively (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Massachusetts is a top performer on the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Program of International Student Assessment (PISA) tests and while the United States as a whole sits at or just below average according to these metrics, Massachusetts consistently performs considerably higher, placing it alongside "some of the top-performing education systems in the world" (OECD, 2016, p. 1).

It is unsurprising therefore, that Massachusetts offered a more progressive voice in its 2018 reforms, declaring the purpose of social studies education to be "to prepare students to have the knowledge and skills to become thoughtful and active participants in a democratic society and a complex world" (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, p. 12). The new *History and Social Science Frameworks* were introduced in 2018, adapting the previous 2003 standards. The NCSS standards were established with the following areas of focus:

- Purposes
- Questions for Exploration
- Knowledge: what learners need to understand
- Process: what learners will be capable of doing
- Products: how learners demonstrate understanding (National Council for the Social Studies, 2014b, para. 12)

Alongside the national standards reform in 2010, the NCSS developed instructional guidance in the form of the *College, Career & Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* (National Council for the Social Studies, 2014a). Designed in the face of the "marginalization of the social studies" to protect the "future of our democracy" and to ensure the "motivation of students" the C3 frameworks were intended to provide instructional guidance for states and teachers to address national and state frameworks primarily through inquiry-based learning that will prepare students for life beyond formal education (National Council for the Social Studies, n.d.-a).

Massachusetts adopted a six-phase approach that, broadly, followed the chronology recommended by the NCSS beginning with engaging stakeholders, acknowledging revisions and public debate, and finishing with the incorporation of standards (The Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2017). The reforms were proposed in 2016, with the process actively taking place between June 2017 and June 2018. Throughout the standards reform documents, there exists no explicit reference to NCSS standards or C3 frameworks. However, the major components of both appear to be present in the Massachusetts standards reform. The *History and Social Science Frameworks* propose a "Renewed Mission: Education for Civic Life in a Democracy" by listing various aims to encourage active civic participation (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, p. 12). Among these aims were an increased focus in the 2018 reform on civics, media literacy and the representation of diverse perspectives (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, p. 3). These explicit aims and purposes are closely related to the NCSS statement of purpose that "The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people make informed and

reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world" (National Council for the Social Studies, 1994, p. 3).

Like the C3 frameworks and the NCSS standards, the Massachusetts *History and Social Science Frameworks* are aligned with broader "literacy standards for history and social sciences" (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, p. 3). These aims are furthered by the ten "Guiding Principles for Effective History and Social Science Education" which include discipline-specific thinking, interdisciplinary approaches to learning, diverse perspectives, critical thinking and socio-emotional skills (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, pp. 13–16).

The standards promote inquiry-based teaching methods centered around questions and problems that require critical thinking and reasoned analysis of source materials (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, pp. 23–25). Content standards outline the knowledge and processes of student learning with supporting questions. Learning sequences, implementation and assessment methods are left to be determined by teachers. During the time period after 2018 and 2020 the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education were developing state testing and assessment methods (The Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2017).

Teachers and Purpose

2020 presented teachers with very real complications in their teaching, particularly social studies teachers (Jewett-Smith, 2020). The mainstream popularity of the Black Lives Matter movement and the ensuing protests, the COVID-19 pandemic and a divisive election have confronted teachers with fresh challenges. In light of recent standards revision and a complex and changing world we are at an opportune moment to understand the relationship between

policy, perspective and practice. The implementation of state frameworks on the teacher-level however can exhibit a difference between theory and practice. Teachers often hold divergent or individual perspectives on their aims for education from state policy (Thornton, 2005). Personal perspectives often relate to concerns in contemporary society such as political moments or classroom and social contexts (Barr et al., 1977).

While there is ample documentation on the causes for change at the policy level, we know little about how teachers conceptualize the purpose of social studies education in relation to the current social moment and recent policy changes. It is vital, given that teachers are gatekeepers to learning, that we understand how they are interpreting the purposes of social studies education in relation to policy and a changing world (Thornton, 2005).

Research Questions

Researchers, theorists and policymakers have painted a varied picture of purpose, exposing the smorgasbord of approaches to social studies education. Yet we still know little about what teachers think about the purposes of social studies today. The following research question therefore, drives this dissertation:

How do teachers perceive the purposes of social studies education?

This is divided into two sub-questions:

1. How do in-service and pre-service teachers perceive the purposes of social studies?
2. How do teachers make sense of complex internal and external pressures and relate to the purposes of social studies education?

These led to the generation of new theories that helped outline the purposes of social studies and, in turn, entailed numerous implications for the future of social studies education.

Overview of Methods

This dissertation uses grounded theory as a means of producing theory to make sense of the purposes of social studies in the current educational climate. I adhered to Charmaz and Belgrave's (2015) rigorous approach to constructivist grounded theory that follows six expansions to classical grounded theory and involves continual data collection and analysis through line-by-line coding from the initial stages of data collection (Charmaz, 2014).

To understand teachers' perceptions on the purposes of social studies in relation to the research questions I focused exclusively on conducting interviews since these provide the rich density and multiple perspectives favorable for grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Although opinion varies on the required amount of interviews to reach saturation, from 15 (Bertaux, 1981) to 20 or 30 (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Morse, 1994), I completed a total of 21 interviews, 10 with in-service teachers and 11 with pre-service teachers since this provided me an adequate number of interviews to draw conclusions within and between certain groups, as well as generating theory of the total sample size in relation to state standards. In order to source participants, I adopted a purposive sampling process whereby I sought teachers (both in-service and pre-service) from a range of backgrounds and contexts. As I conducted interviews, I used an iterative approach to collect data that spanned multiple demographics including race, gender, age and experience (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2015; Miles & Huberman, 1994). During the ongoing data analysis, I also employed theoretical sampling to address emerging categories (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2015).

Conceptual Framework

Purpose

Throughout this dissertation I discuss the idea of "purpose" in education. The basic assumption here is that there is some underlying aim for social studies education beyond a mere acquisition of skills. Indeed, there was the possibility that the acquisition of skills represented the purpose of social studies education for some teachers. My assumption going into the study was that this sense of purpose could be on an individual, statewide, national or even global scale. I take "purpose" to be the belief that underpinning education is "a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at the same time meaningful to the self and consequential for the world beyond the self" (Damon, 2009, p. 33). This dissertation does not seek a singular, unifying sense of purpose but acknowledges the coexistence of multiple purposes of social studies education.

There are subtle differences between purpose, goals and aims in education and I offer a brief overview of these differences as conceptualized throughout this dissertation. Thornton (2018) argued that "purpose" is an underlying or overarching aim towards which all of social studies education tends. Beneath the overarching purpose of social studies education are goals and objectives. Noddings (2004) associated "objectives" with lessons, "goals" with courses, and "aims" with deeper questions in education (p. 332). Noddings' (2004) definition of "aims" seems almost synonymous with "purpose" and for this dissertation I treat them as equivalent.

Social Studies

Social Studies education is a discipline that did not exist as a school subject in the nineteenth century in the US. Previously, history was one of the most important subjects in school, and historians in many ways opposed the creation of social studies, fearing it would

diminish the significance of their discipline. A turning point occurred when the *1916 Report on Social Studies* defined the subject as "those whose subject matter relates directly to the organization and development of human society, and to man as a member of social groups" (M. Nelson, 1994, p. 9). Most commonly the subjects that make up social studies can be thought of as including "history, geography, civics, economics, and sociology" while drawing on elements of humanities subjects such as "ethics, psychology, philosophy, anthropology, art…[and]...literature" (Wesley, 1944, Chapter 5, para. 10). The NCSS suggests that social studies draws "upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences" (National Council for the Social Studies, 1994, p. 3). A simple definition of what is included in social studies is hard to come by and varies somewhat by state. For the purpose of this dissertation therefore I have taken the Massachusetts definition for social studies which emphasizes four major "fields" including history, geography, civics and economics and draws on the traditions of other humanities disciplines (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, p. 17).

Pre-service and In-service

This dissertation focuses on the views of pre-service and in-service teachers. Pre-service teachers differ from in-service teachers because they are not under full-term employment from schools and are undergoing some form of formal educational preparation program (Campbell, 1996). This includes undergraduate students engaged in teacher training programs with a view to teach full time after graduation and college graduates pursuing licensure and (or) Master's of Education.

As recent products of the educational system, pre-service teachers are in a unique position to prepare students for the future. Unburdened by the institutionalization of education brought by an extended position in the career, pre-service teachers occupy multiple spaces simultaneously and are generally positive about the impact of teaching (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992). Pre-service teachers are more likely to hold idealistic views for education, entering the profession for intrinsic or altruistic reasons (Chong & Low, 2009). As such, understanding the extent to which pre-service teachers are concerned about educating students in preparation for the future is an important issue.

To compare and contrast the views of pre-service teachers I included perspectives from in-service teachers. In-service teachers are defined as a member of the teaching staff in full-time employment in a middle or high school setting teaching any social studies subjects. This included all levels of experience from first-year teachers to veteran teachers.

Significance

There currently exists no recent studies on the purpose of social studies, particularly in relation to the current socio-political climate. Social studies, a subject so closely related to society, constantly re-envisions its purposes. Furthermore, this dissertation conducted an important analysis on the effects of the recent Massachusetts social studies framework changes. There is no existing research on the Massachusetts policy framework change. Little research currently exists on the development of purpose throughout social studies teaching careers. This dissertation provides pointed insights on the perspectives of teachers at various stages of their teaching careers, including, pre-service, novice and veteran teachers.

Overview of Chapters

In Chapter Two I give an overview of the literature that examines the historical development of social studies education and its purposes, both explicitly stated and as implicitly recognized by researchers in the evolution of social narratives and educational change. I also provide an overview of the current state of social studies education and purpose. I conclude with an analysis of relevant theoretical frames employed in the following chapters. In Chapter Three I give an overview of the methods with a close look at grounded theory as a general methodology. In Chapter Four I present the findings related to the first sub-research question, exploring the views of pre-service and in-service teachers on the purposes of education and social studies education. In Chapter Five I look at the second sub-research question and analyze the effects of three types of internal and external pressures on teachers' manifestation of purpose. Finally, in Chapter Six I present theories that emerged from the data and talk across both sub-research questions to draw overarching conclusions relating to the dissertation as a whole.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This dissertation focuses on teachers' perceptions of the purposes of social studies education in relation to a turbulent society, recent policy changes, and their own contexts. In this chapter I present a thorough literature review that addresses the research questions in three parts. First, I give a historical overview of the development of social studies and its purposes as theorized in research and as presented by social studies organizations both explicitly and implicitly. After detailing the history of social studies, I offer an appreciation of how various scholars have organized the purposes of social studies education. Finally, I approach relevant theories such as sensemaking, gatekeeping, social realism, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

To address my research questions, and in designing this literature review I considered the following questions:

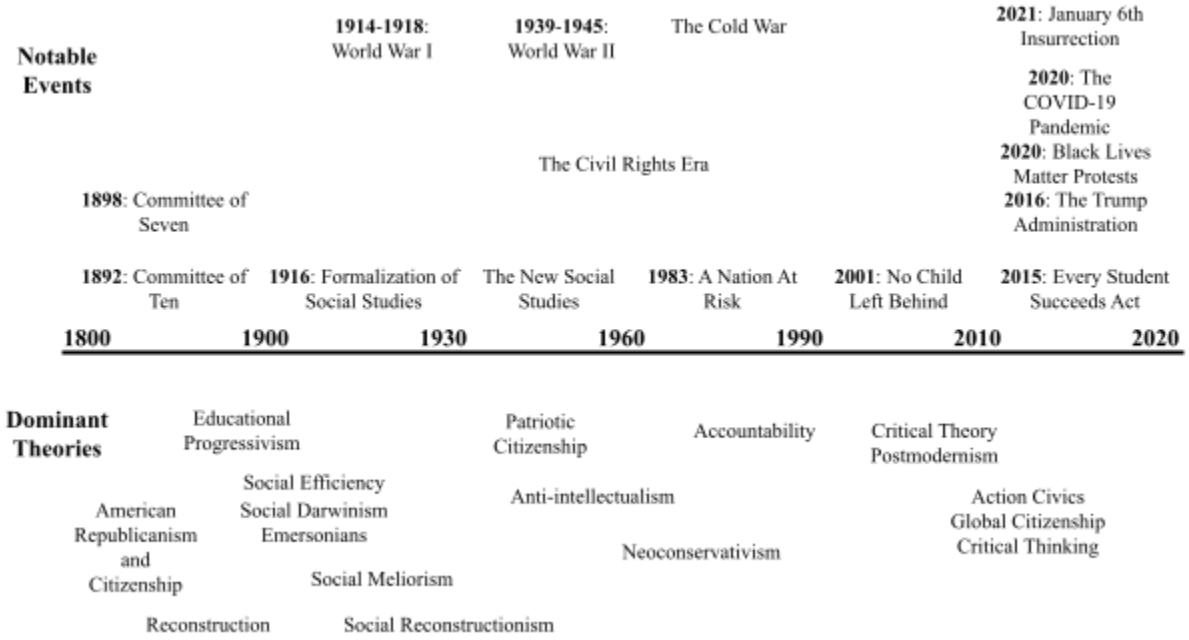
- "What does the literature say about the purpose of social studies education, and how has this changed over time?"
- "What does the literature say about the purposes of social studies today?"
- "How do teachers make sense of policy in their teaching?"
- "How do teachers, as gatekeepers of learning, deal with purpose in their classrooms, particularly given the social realities of the classroom?"

This literature review includes a wide variety of sources including empirical research, policy, reports, academic books, dissertations, and conceptual articles. I began by searching educational research databases using key terms such as "purpose," "social studies education," "teacher gatekeeping," and "sensemaking." Through familiarization with these articles and reading the citations I expanded the literature review to all relevant articles.

Figure 2.1 gives a graphic representation of the stages of development in the purposes of social studies education and relevant contemporary events explored throughout the literature review. The graphic does not suggest that the development of purposes were linear, isolated, or restricted to certain time periods, rather it is a representation of the key moments and dominant theoretical perspectives present in the literature.

Figure 2.1.

The Development of Purposes Throughout the History of Social Studies Education



Historical Developments of Purpose and Social Studies Education

Education in the Late Nineteenth Century and the Foundations for Social Studies

Tracing the development of purpose in social studies education is a task best undertaken chronologically. In this section, I chart the growth and tensions of the discipline of social studies education from its inception to the present, paying attention to contemporary educational change,

important social movements, and the underlying impacts these had on the purposes of social studies whether stated explicitly or implicitly as analyzed by researchers, historians and policymakers.

Although this literature review maps the development of the purpose of social studies chronologically, there exist scholars throughout each time period that may relate their purposes to other scholars found during different time periods (Ross et al., 2014). Evans (2004) and Saxe (1997), for example, build largely on the work of Dewey who was more present in the development of purpose in relation to the progressive education era. This literature review does not claim to present the underlying influences for each individual thinker and I acknowledge that concepts such as "purpose" do not exist in neat, easily definable buckets but instead build on existing research and individual convictions. Research is a complex bundle of eccentricities. More often it is similar *differences* as opposed to familiarities that help define the field. This literature therefore, maps out general trends in the development of social studies education and its purpose.

The first use of the term "social studies" to refer to a formal curricular discipline is often traced back to the Committee on Social Studies of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education in 1916, where, Lybarger (1981) noted, "the popular use of the term 'social studies' to refer collectively to economics, history, political science and sociology" was introduced (pp. 1-2). As Lybarger noted, the determination of the discipline "social studies" did not happen in a vacuum, but rather through a reflection of practice and phenomena. In tracing the origins of social studies and its purpose therefore, attention must be paid to the foundations laid for its inception.

Early American education followed an eurocentric design that did not include social studies as a distinct curricular discipline (Hertzberg, 1981). Disciplines that would later form constituent parts of social studies existed in several states, with varying degrees of emphasis placed on their content (Hertzberg, 1981). Towards the end of the nineteenth century subjects in schools akin to modern social studies included: the social sciences which were "formal investigations in anthropology, political science, economics, sociology, social statistics, social psychology, and social geography," social education, and individual subjects such as geography and history (Barr et al., 1977; Saxe, 1991, p. 4). Content-driven history courses aimed to reinforce the beginnings of the United States and held a reverence for classical antiquity (Evans, 2004). Although citizenship and civic engagement were prized purposes of history education, underlying ideological aims were often "transmitting culture and myth, patriotism, and good citizenship" (Evans, 2004, p. 5).

Elson (1964) described nineteenth century schoolbooks as concerned with "love of country, love of god, duty to parents, the necessity to develop habits of thrift, honesty, and hard work...the certainty of progress, the perfection of the United States. These are not to be questioned" (p. 338). Towards the turn of the century, "civic-mindedness" or "citizenship" education had "become a dominant idea in American educational thought for both the traditional history advocates and the emerging social studies insurgents" (Saxe, 1991, p. 7).

"Fragmentary" statistical evidence suggests that "history, civil government, and political economy were not major school subjects" towards the end of the 1800s, with states such as Ohio reporting only 4% of schools offering some form of history education (Hertzberg, 1981, p. 4; Jenness, 1990). Nelson (1992) claimed that "it was not until 1890 that a major reference appears in the official papers of the AHA as to history as a school subject" (p. 248) and according to

Boozer (1960), at the time of the Committee of Ten, history was "not universally accepted as a respectable discipline" (p. 48).

Tryon (1935) and Peet (1984) however, disagreed, and suggested that history was far more commonplace than official records suggest. Although there appears little consistent evidence for these claims, it does appear that geography as a subject often "subsumed" history and was present throughout the 1800s (Jenness, 1990, p. 65). Although a decentralized American system yielded little empirical data on the state of history education, the beginning of the Reconstruction period signified a new America that would prize history education and social unification (Hertzberg, 1981). Changing social thought that embraced industrialization and social progression over individualism placed an emphasis on the importance of institutions and inter-relationships between human beings (Harris, 1888; Kliebard, 2004; Saxe, 1991).

Whereas previously history education had been a means reinforcing the ideologies of Protestantism, capitalism, and republicanism (Kaestle, 1983), contemporary educational theorists of the late 1800s emphasized "the State and how collectives made civilization possible" (Harris, 1888, p. 575). Development of the social sciences, and therefore its role in education, was a direct attribute of evolving Western social, political and economic thought (Saxe, 1991). As such, late nineteenth century curriculum reform sought to refocus the purpose of history education.

The National Educational Association's (NEA) Committee of Ten and its subcommittees on History, Civil Government, and Political Economy, and Geography met in 1892 as part of an "intense" reexamination of the American education system in the post-war period (M. Nelson, 1992, p. 244). Although history education had traditionally received little attention, the late part of the nineteenth century experienced significant growth as history courses were established at major colleges (M. Nelson, 1992). The Committee of Ten recognized the growth in college

history courses and acknowledged the purpose of history education for non-college-bound students, centered around informed critical judgment based on the past (National Education Association, 1894; M. Nelson, 1992; Tryon, 1935). Given its desire to establish itself as an important area of future curricula, the history subcommittee was extensive, well-written and combined discipline-specific concerns across multiple social science subjects with the wider purpose of democratic engagement (Hertzberg, 1981; M. Nelson, 1992; Sizer, 1976).

The final report from the Committee of Ten was met with a mixed reception. Course offerings in general history, political economy, and civil government increased in the following years (Tryon, 1935). Its recommendations with regards to Latin and Greek, however, were ignored. Yet some in the wider educational community were displeased with the final Committee of Ten's recommendations, including its traditional course of study and the lack of adherence to recommendations from the subcommittee (M. Nelson, 1992; Selmeier, 1948; Small, 1897). As a result, argued Sizer (1976), the AHA organized its own "Committee of Seven" in 1898. The Committee of Seven expanded on the legacy of the Committee of Ten, emphasizing the importance of history education for all citizens including the public and subject specialists (Hertzberg, 1981). A commitment to research and civic engagement drove the Committee of Seven to conclude history education was "peculiarly appropriate for...developing boys and girls into men and women" and "preparing…[them] for the duties of daily life and intelligent citizenship" (American Historical Association, 1899, pp. 120–122). Despite attempts towards a more progressive education, one that placed deeper faith in the potential of history education as a means for civic engagement (heavily important in post-Civil War America), its rigid, four-block sequential curricula and contemporary educational and social standing meant that history education as recommended by the Committee of Seven was not the unlimited progressivism its

supporters claimed it should be (Evans, 2004; Hertzberg, 1981; Jenness, 1990; M. Nelson, 1992; Saxe, 1991). Indeed, it appears that the Committee of Seven was progressive in content alone, as opposed to practice or general progressive theories of education.

Educational Progressivism: Divergent Theoretical Perspectives and the Social

The age of educational progressivism, in its infancy in the late 1880s, embraced a connection between the "social" components of education in relation to social change, and existing educational disciplines (Bohan, 2003; Evans, 1990; Hertzberg, 1981; Lybarger, 1981). Educational progressivism, spanning the period roughly between the late 1800s through the 1930s, saw advocates of multiple different perspectives on education fighting for control (Evans, 2004; Kliebard, 2004).

Reformers argued that an American curriculum born of the European Renaissance was inappropriate in an increasingly industrialized society undergoing dramatic epistemological transformations (Kliebard, 2004). As such, various individuals and groups of individuals advocated for the pathways of the new American curriculum. Reese (2001) and Bohan (2003) traced the epistemological theories of progressive education through the work of philosophers such as Rousseau, Locke, and Emerson, to the importance of universal public education. Uniquely American progressive education held foundations in the theories of Darwinists such as Frank and Small, who married individual progression with social evolution (Dewey, 1903; Evans, 2004). Progressivism, with its "antecedents in romanticism and the 18th- and 19th-century reform movements of the Western world" embodied popular philosophy and emphasized the importance of pedagogy, the individual child, and issues-focused education (Bohan, 2003, p. 76; Evans, 2004; Hertzberg, 1981). Whereas, Dewey argued, social efficiency would "educate the child based on predictions of what the society would be like" and "differentiate the

curriculum based on the particular role an individual would be expected to occupy in that society," child-centered education portrayed the child as "striving, active being[s] capable of intelligent self-direction" (Kliebard, 2004, pp. 47–48). A child-centered approach operated in stark contrast to the views of social efficiency that Dewey (1916) believed relegated children to a "waiting list" for adulthood (p. 63). In his child-study research, Hall (1904) rebuked the committee of Ten, arguing that such educational policies limited the agency of high schools, and reduced education to training through content when in fact students require "spontaneous variation" and "free, vigorous growth" (Hall, 1904, p. 509; J. L. Young, 2016). One means of realizing a child-centered approach to social studies education was through an issues-focused curriculum, one that moved beyond rigid subjects and instead allowed room for inventive pedagogy, learning and student direction (Hertzberg, 1981).

Of particular influence to those researchers concerned with the social sciences and history were theories of social efficiency and social meliorism (Evans, 2004; Hertzberg, 1981; Kliebard, 2004). "Far more important" than traditional history which included study of ancient civilizations, argued Hertzberg (1981), "was the climate of the time." "'Social' was one of the most popular adjectives in the lexicon of reform: social betterment, social gospel, social efficiency, social surveys, social settlement, social control, social education" (p. 12). As a result a disciplinary shift towards modern history and society occurred, shaped according to contemporary social and academic thought (Lybarger, 1981).

Larger theoretical debates on the purpose of education translated to social sciences and history education and a divide started to appear between social advocates and disciplinarians (Evans, 2004; Hertzberg, 1981). Proponents of social efficiency such as Bobbitt, Snedden and Thorndike critiqued traditional history and favored a combination of social history and the social

sciences which helped shape the next generation of students efficiently (Evans, 2004; Saxe, 1991). According to Snedden, due to "the spirit of the social economy of our time … all forms of social activity should be purposeful and efficient" (Snedden, 1914, p. 277). The role of education in society, argued Bobbitt, was "to prepare for the fifty years of adulthood, not for the twenty years of childhood and youth" (Bobbitt, 1924, p. 8). In the case of social science and history education this entailed a deeper purpose than merely knowing one's historical background or passing college examinations (Snedden, 1914). Instead, Snedden (1914) proposed citizenship education that helped train students into desired adults capable of social cooperation, submission and adherence to social values. History education, he argued, is the documentation and appreciation of social development necessary to "carry on the group life" (Snedden, 1914, p. 280). Traditional history and social science education needed to become a unified social education (Saxe, 1991; Snedden, 1907).

Yet there still existed strong defenders of traditional history (Evans, 2004; Saxe, 1991). Highlighting the tension between the growing crowd of social education supporters and traditional historians, Johnson argued that curricula influenced by contemporary society was an "absurdity" because "events are constantly changing" (Evans, 2004, p. 23). The tension between historians and "social" advocates ebbed and flowed throughout the history of social studies and was present in the very foundations of social studies education (Evans, 2004).

As social efficiency advocates campaigned for social education, early social meliorists (and later social reconstructionists) argued for "a reflective or issues-centered curriculum and...emphasize[d] curricular attention to social problems" (Evans, 2006, para. 7). Despite the "heyday" of social meliorism occurring during the late 1920s, its impact was felt on the development of social studies education in the early 1900s (Evans, 2004; Kliebard, 2004; Schul,

2015). Similar to, although not synonymous with Dewey, social meliorists in history and developing social studies circles advanced a child-centered approach that favored dynamic pedagogies including the appreciation of current social issues, issues-focused teaching and experimentalism (Greiner, 2016; Jenness, 1990; Schul, 2015). By placing individual students and their interests at the center of learning, social meliorists encouraged education that challenged the established social order (Greiner, 2016). The purpose of history education, argued Dewey (1903, 1916), was to allow individual students to learn the existing social order through the eyes of the past. For Dewey, history education served the individual through an appreciation of the social (Saxe, 1991). Traditional history and rote memorization of facts was "dead" and not "functional" (Saxe, 1991, p. 123). Instead through their self-activity students should understand history as the manifestation of social developments to form the present .

The development of social studies as a distinct subject occurred as a natural culmination of changing social phenomena and related educational changes. Social science and history education with its foundations in citizenship became "social education" which emphasized a "socially centered school curriculum" of which "social studies" education offered a more narrow approach to democratic instruction (Saxe, 1991, p. 11). Three trends of social thought, argued Saxe (1991) are evident in the formalization of the social studies: Social reformers who supported social responsibility in reform efforts such as Dewey and Comte; Social Darwinists such as Spencer, Graham and Sumner who documented the natural, inevitable flow of social evolution; and Emersonians who believed individual development to be of foremost importance (p. 5-6). Taken in conjunction with the similar elements of progressive education and the groups of social efficiency advocates, social meliorists and social reconstructionists, and the ongoing competition between scholars who championed education for individualistic versus social ends,

it is clear that competing theoretical social movements were present at the time of the formation of the social studies program between 1913-1916 (Evans, 2004; Hertzberg, 1981; Saxe, 1991).

A Watershed Moment: The Formalization of the Social Studies Discipline

The "watershed" moment of the 1916 report on *The Social Studies in Secondary Education* signifies the first formal recognition of social studies education following the preliminary 1913 report (Dunn, 1916; Jenness, 1990). The 1916 report gave the first clear definition of social studies subjects as "those whose subject matter relates directly to the organization and development of human society, and to man as a member of social groups" (Dunn, 1916, p. 9). Despite this much needed clarity, the definition allowed for interpretation and the inclusion of multiple social science disciplines less prominent in previous curricula (Saxe, 1991).

In place of the outdated curricula and aims proposed by the earlier educational committees the 1916 report, spearheaded by social studies advocates, launched social studies as a curricular discipline into American public schools (Saxe, 1991). The aim of the social studies in the 1916 report was, according to Saxe (1991), "attending to the twin paradoxes of freedom versus conformity and the individual versus society" (p. 149). In answer to this paradox the 1916 report embraced the theories of social efficiency (Evans, 2004; Hertzberg, 1981; Saxe, 1991). The "keynote" of education, stated the report, "is 'social efficiency,' and instruction in all subjects should contribute to this end" (Dunn, 1916, p. 9). Any treatment of the individual was done so as a means of cultivating desirable aspects for social ends (Saxe, 1991). A "good citizen" or "thoroughly efficient member" of a neighborhood in whom existed a "loyalty and a sense of obligation to his city, State, and Nation as political units" was the ideal student of social studies (Dunn, 1916, p. 9). A sense of national idealism (and to some extent nationalism) appeared

throughout the report that stated its "specific aim" as "an intelligent and genuine loyalty" to "high national ideals" (Dunn, 1916, p. 10; Evans, 2004; Saxe, 1991). Cultivation of an individual's intellectual capabilities beyond social progress was not a concern of the committee (Saxe, 1991). Supporters of Emersonian educational aims lost to more socially oriented educational aims. In curricula terms this was most evident through the creation of the 12th grade course "Problems of Democracy," which approached social issues through a combination of government, economics and sociology (Evans, 2004, 2006; Hertzberg, 1981).

Although social efficiency was the stated purpose of the 1916 report, a Deweyian influenced version of social meliorism appeared throughout the report recognizing the present needs of students in "the psychological and social moment" to "make the instruction function effective...in his process of growth" (Dunn, 1916, p. 11; Saxe, 1991). Whereas previous history education conferences had promoted an intellectual content-driven approach, the 1916 report acknowledged some importance of individual student choice, if only to achieve the overarching goal of group progress (Saxe, 1991). Although ultimately the report fell back on the theories of social efficiency, it paved the way for further progressives to accelerate the theories of social meliorism and social reconstructionism with the formal establishment of social studies education (Evans, 2004).

Further Progressivism: Dewey, Beard, Rugg and War-Time Social Studies

Following the formalization of social studies education the 1920s and 1930s saw a steady increase in progressive approaches as it wrestled with the implementation of the 1916 reforms and ongoing theoretical discussions in education (Hertzberg, 1981). "Turf battles" existed among various camps offering different understandings of social studies and its purpose, and ongoing tensions between social studies advocates and traditional historians (Evans, 2004, p. 47; Saxe,

1991). Three scholars (among others) had a profound influence on social studies education between 1916 and the late 1930s: Dewey, Beard and Rugg.

Although present in both the committees of Ten and Seven, and the 1916 report, the philosophy of Dewey was an important presence in social studies meetings throughout the 1920s and 1930s (Egan, 1980; Hertzberg, 1981). The Dewyian version of social efficiency (alongside Beardian and Robinsonian developments) "that the commission expressed" was "suitably adapted to a nation caught in a depression" instead of rigidly following the calls of the more fervent social efficiency advocates (Hertzberg, 1981, p. 45). Dewey (1909) highlighted the importance of social connection in the face of rising industrialization and individualism, with which citizenship education was primarily concerned (Carpenter, 2006). The increased emphasis on citizenship education in the 1916 report and the ensuing years is somewhat reflective of these Deweyian ideals (Carpenter, 2006; Saxe, 1991). Dewey's influence on social studies, while not explicit, spoke to the larger themes of citizenship and democratic education particularly in relation to the subjects of history and geography (Carpenter, 2006). Social studies' significance are rooted in their potential to connect the individual to the wider human experience, of "bringing about the enlargement of the significance of a direct personal experience" (Dewey, 1916, p. 218). Indeed, the "possibilities afforded by the social studies were so promising for Dewey that he urged that they should not exist separately in isolation from other curricula" rather, that they should be placed in conversation with all other subjects (Carpenter, 2006, p. 35). For Dewey (1916), education was not intended to be instrumental in realizing some social end, rather it was the ends itself.

Somewhat presciently, Dewey argued that if social studies was to retain its potential purpose as a means of encouraging democratic education and social cohesion it must be

integrated within wider subject areas. Otherwise, he argued, it would "become either accumulations of bodies of special factual information or, in the hands of zealous teachers, to be organs of indoctrination in the sense of propaganda for a special social end, accepted enthusiastically, perhaps, but still dogmatically" (Dewey, 1938, p. 369).

Despite his influence on social studies education, Dewey ultimately lost control of the curriculum to social efficiency advocates such as Snedden and Thorndike. Dewey's philosophy, argued Kliebard (2004), was far more suited to "the world of ideas" than to practice (p. 139). Indeed, the concrete goals and objectives of social efficiency appeared more attractive to policymakers; they were far more suited to implementation and rested on "science" (Labaree, 2010). Furthermore, Dewey's romanticism was a far less marketable product than a "utilitarian vision," and spoke directly to those in positions of power (Labaree, 2010, p. 181; Lagemann, 2000). Snedden, argued Labaree (2010), was far more well placed to suit the demands of a system; one structured around administrative reforms and upheld by administrators that favored bureaucracy. Labaree (2010) concluded, "the ideas that shape history are those that history is ready for, the ones that resonate with the concerns of the time and help frame a response to these concerns" (p. 182).

While 1916 may signify the formalization of social studies education and discussions about its purpose, the implementation of social studies curricula and ongoing conversation about its practical purpose was primarily attributable to Harold Rugg (Mraz, 2004). Rugg's approach to integrating the social studies (alongside Dewey's) was indicative of the contemporary belief that clear demarcation between social studies subjects may seem appropriate to the mature, adult mind, yet was in fact confusing and illogical for students in the ways they experienced the world (Dewey, 1966; Kliebard, 2004). Many of Rugg's contemporaries, including Harris and Dewey

argued that a more integrated approach to educational disciplines was required all the way through to academic study (Kliebard, 2004). Rugg (1931) produced a successful textbook series in the 1930s that embodied his theoretical work from earlier years, delineating social studies instruction and centering it around issues in order to fulfill the purpose of engagement with modes of living and problems in the real world (Evans, 2004). Commonly recognized as the first unified social studies educator, Rugg pushed for integrative, multi-disciplinary social studies education in concrete curriculum models.

Together with his colleagues at Teachers College, Rugg (1933) debated the purpose of social studies and favored a social reconstructionist approach that emphasized an inclusive democratic vision made known through multidisciplinary education (Evans, 2004). The purpose of social studies, for social reconstructionists, was "citizenship education aimed at providing students opportunities for an examination, critique, and revision of past traditions, existing social practices, and modes of problem solving" (Ross et al., 2014, p. 29). Eventually his language of "social engineering" and aggressive progressivism resulted in him being branded as a Marxist by a number of conservative media outlets despite support from a number of educational institutions (Evans, 2004, p. 61, 2006; Mraz, 2004). Rugg's textbooks were successful until a more conservative, nationalist leaning of the late 1930s overtook the purpose of social studies education.

In support of the philosophies of social reconstructionism in social studies education, Beard played a major role in the final report of the Commission on the Social Studies in the Schools of the American Historical Association (Kliebard, 2004). In response to the perceived decline of individualism, the new age of collectivism (and thus social reconstructionism) was deemed appropriate in social studies (American Historical Association, 1934; Kliebard, 2004).

Beard (1929) highlighted the ongoing tensions between traditional historians and social studies advocates counterbalancing the ongoing "indefinite … boundaries," underdeveloped teaching methods and testing, and "numerous … intangibles" with the "substance" and "reality, in social studies" (p. 371). For Beard, social studies education moved beyond the static content of traditional history and spoke to the present moment (Evans, 2004). The purpose of social studies in conversation with contemporary society was, he argued, to adhere to disciplinary changes, promote authentic thought as opposed to recitation in an industrial society, and to promote engaged democratic citizenship (Watras, 2000).

The War Years: Progressivism Gives Way to Patriotism

Dewey, Beard, Rugg and their contemporaries signified the ongoing tensions between different perspectives on the purposes of social studies education throughout the 1920s and 1930s (Evans, 2004, 2006; Saxe, 1991). By the time the Second World War broke out the focus of educational research had shifted somewhat, away from the underlying purposes and aims of social studies education, and towards the perfection of methods (Evans, 2004; Hertzberg, 1981). As was the case during the First World War, the Second World War saw an increased emphasis on citizenship education and pride in American history (Hertzberg, 1981). Under a tide of nationalism and pre-, during and post-war patriotism, the collectivist aspects of social studies education began to transform (Evans, 2004, 2006). "With America's entry to the war imminent," argued Kliebard, "criticism of American society fell out of vogue in favor of a wave of patriotism occasioned by an external threat of aggression" (Kliebard, 2004, pp. 207–208). Even "frontier thinkers" aligned with views of the occasional necessity of war and as such ideological democratic citizenship, as it had been following the conclusion of the Civil War, became a natural part of social studies education at the beginning of the 1940s (Evans, 2004, p. 70). The

Second World War, argued Evans (2004), was the "death of progressive education" (p. 70). Early social studies education had proffered tensions between different theoretical camps, between social studies advocates and traditional historians, and culminated in a wave of progressive education that ultimately met the immovable roadblock of the Second World War (Evans, 2004, 2006).

The conclusion of the Second World War again sparked an interest in "general education" but in this instance with a specification on "the 'special education' needed for specific occupations" (Hertzberg, 1981, p. 76). Along with it and in response to Wesley's earlier concerns the popularization of a core curriculum increased, signifying a more standardized approach to social studies education (Hertzberg, 1981). Intellectually, social studies education was caught in between a steady divorce from academic history while simultaneously accused of being dominated by history educators (Hertzberg, 1981). Independent reports published by the *New York Times* (Fine, 1943; Nevins, 1942; 1943) and the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* (Jordan, 1942) argued that social studies had become far too left leaning, claiming it criticized the United States government and that students were historically ignorant. For Wesley (1943) and the *American History in the Schools and Colleges* report (Wesley, 1944), the fault was on those who failed to promote collaboration between different levels of educators and thus left the overarching purpose of social studies open to various stakeholders dependent on their personal preferences and political convictions (Hertzberg, 1981).

The New Social Studies, Reform and the Beginnings of Accountability

After the war, an increased focus on methods, a desire for a unified social studies and a common core, and the rumblings of increased federal oversight set the stage for the 1950s, the New Social Studies and, later on, the beginnings of the accountability era. Memory of previous

debates appeared to have been lost with the passage of time, such that there was no consideration throughout the post-war period of the historical development of social studies education, and how it might inform the continuing dynamism of the field (Byford & Russell, 2007; Hertzberg, 1981).

Post-war social studies became increasingly content-focused partially as a response to criticisms that the progressive educators' interest in social meliorism had overstepped its boundaries and was promoting social criticism without due regard for historical accuracy (Byford & Russell, 2007; Evans, 2004). With a growing fear of communism, critics of progressive social studies education portrayed it as damaging left-wing propaganda, or "REDucation" (Jones & Olivier, 1956), and as lacking in intellectual rigor (Byford & Russell, 2007; Gauss, 1954; Winfield Scott & Hill, 1954, p. 149; Wood, 1954). Sensationalist historians commented on contemporary social studies education's ability to "condition the child's mind to accept socialism" by teaching "that there is not much greatness in our history" and while this may appear attractive "it is *socialism*, sold under a deceptive label" (Flynn, 1954, pp. 160–161).

The mistrust of contemporary teaching methods and the rapid spread of anti-communist thought exacerbated the criticism of progressive social studies education (Winfield Scott & Hill, 1954). History educators, not necessarily unfairly, reiterated the importance of content knowledge for contemporary social and educational prosperity. "It is obvious" argued Dixon (1954) "that no one can love anything or take pride in it without first knowing something about it...there can be no adequate appreciation of America and what it represents without knowledge of its history, its traditions and accomplishments" (p.150).

The muddled progressive education offered by social studies education for the purpose of democratic engagement, argued contemporary history educators, was severely lacking in content

knowledge that could promote the fundamental democratic principles of American life (Dixon, 1954; Gauss, 1954; Jones & Olivier, 1956). NCSS produced a collaborative report with the American Council of Learned Society (ACLS) that determined the purpose of social studies to be overwhelmingly similar to the 1916 consensus, yet with an emphasis on "*desirable* socio-civic behavior" rooted in democracy (Todd, 1962, p. 290). Social studies and the ideals of democratic citizenship education were placed in direct opposition to the totalitarian citizenship of the USSR (Byford & Russell, 2007; Todd, 1962).

Contemporary social life continued to shape the purpose of social studies education throughout the post-war era. Byford and Russell (2007) suggested four landmark moments of 1950s American history that influenced large-scale social studies reforms: "The Korean War, closed areas of society, the Purdue public opinion poll, and the launching of Sputnik" (p. 39). For Hertzberg (1981), the Eisenhower administration suppressed academics and intellectualism (the liberal arts) in favor of mathematics, science and subjects that would catalyze America's international standing. It may be that the progressive education period exacerbated a tide of anti-intellectualism by focusing social studies education on compliant citizenship, preparation for the workplace and socialization at the expense of a love for the liberal arts themselves (Neem, 2020).

Education sidelined intellectual curiosity for "life adjustments," argued Hofstadter (1963) and instead favored science and mathematics. As early as 1954 the American Association for the Advancement of Science highlighted the increased funding placed on mathematics and science at the expense of social studies, a point reiterated in the insubstantial funds afforded by the National Defense Education Act of 1958 (Todd, 1962). The Russian launch of Sputnik resonated with the American public and education experts who determined that in order for America to remain

relevant on the international stage it must produce students that were prepared to exist in an ideologically driven and technologically oriented future; educational reform was unleashed (Byford & Russell, 2007; Hertzberg, 1981; Lagemann, 2000). Criticism of the educational system was "crystallized in a powerful triumvirate of universities, private foundations and government. Largely excluded were classroom teachers" (Herztberg, 1981, p. 97). Armed with plentiful funding, particularly in the sciences following Sputnik, large-scale reform ushered in the 1960s and social studies education was forced to respond.

Social studies reform of the 1960s took the shape of "the new social studies," programs that were highly critical of the haphazard 1950s approaches (Byford & Russell, 2007). The new social studies rested upon the work of, among others, Bruner (1969, 1977) and Schwab (1969) and argued that to serve the purpose of "successful citizenship," social studies should consist of the advancement of individual social sciences to create an elaborate tapestry of human social contexts (Ross et al., 2014, p. 25). Unprecedented federal support beginning with the National Science Foundation's funding in 1961 gave rise to a host of new social studies approaches, some of which like *Man: A Course of Study (MACOS)* and *The Harvard Social Studies Project* received national acclaim (Byford & Russell, 2007; Hertzberg, 1981).

Lists of programs compiled by Hertzberg (1981), Byford and Russell (2007), and Sanders and Tanck (1972) indicated at least 50 unique approaches undertaken during the 1960s. Yet teachers displayed a reluctance to implement the new social studies approach, seemingly due to fundamental differences on the perception of the purposes of social studies. Whereas the new social studies projects limited the role of teachers to the implementation of resources, the civil rights era of the mid to late 1960s saw teachers wish to perform a far more active role in social studies education (Hertzberg, 1981).

Social studies educators adopted the requirement of responding to social issues of the day whereas some research suggests the NCSS' "record on civil rights can only be characterized as negligent at best...NCSS largely ignored the civil rights movement" (J. L. Nelson & Fernekes, 1996, pp. 96, 98). Teachers and low-status groups can and do catalyze change in the formalization of academic disciplines. Goodson's (1981) summary of the development of Geography education detailed the influence of teachers on the development of academic disciplines. The new social studies, argued Hertzberg (1981), largely neglected the civil rights movement at the time, and were instead rooted "in the world of the 1950s which 'the new social studies' had arisen, not the 1960s world in which their materials were being developed" (p. 117). Those attempts to speak to the civil rights movement from an institutional standpoint, did so in a tokenistic way (Cuban in Hertzberg, 1981). For Cuban (1967), a shift in instructional methods and teacher advocacy was not enough to serve the needs of the civil rights movement; instead he (and others) called for a dramatic restructuring of the education system writ large.

In academic and teaching social studies circles at any rate, there existed the rise, once again, of an alternative purpose of social studies: challenging established social history and emancipating the oppressed (Hertzberg, 1981). *Social Education* published special issues of citizenship education programs (Remy, 1972) and Black history (Hare, 1969) and continued to do so throughout the 1970s. Teachers' beliefs in activism appeared to be in line with the NCSS position that valued "knowledge" and "social participation" of social problems alongside "commitment to human dignity" and value (Manson et al., 1971, p. 1).

The new social studies movement failed to gain significant traction but did manage to expose an over-reliance on textbooks and facilitated the production of fresh supplementary resources for teachers (Byford & Russell, 2007; Hertzberg, 1981). Failings of the new social

studies movement were attributed to a variety of factors. Byford and Russell (2007) emphasized ineffective, lacking or poorly communicated teacher training that would enable the implementation of "affective skills" and materials (p. 45). Lockwood (1985) suggested that resources developed within the new social studies were often too advanced for students' reading and comprehension levels, a drastic oversight from policymakers and interest groups producing resources. Students' lack of cognitive or reading abilities to approach the source material may have been factually accurate but may also have been the perceptions held by teachers (Lockwood, 1985). Finally, Massialis (1963) noted the inadequate appreciation of the differences between research and classroom practice whereby research and policy failed to recognize the realities of daily classroom practice.

The number of new social studies programs was overwhelming; ambitious and exciting yet inevitably ill-fated (Evans, 2004). There also existed significant public reaction to new social studies programs. MACOS was eventually debated in the Senate due to its ties with (public) NSF funding and had some strong ideological critics (Lagemann, 2000). Lagemann (2000) presented several vivid reactions to MACOS including a member of the Citizens for Moral Education group who called it "godless, humanistic, evolution-based, socialistic, and 'sensual in philosophy'" (p. 174). Overall, however, the ultimate downfall of the new social studies could be attributed to "a failure to delineate purposes: we are uncertain about which knowledge is of most worth and why" (Gross in Hertzberg, 1981, p. 113).

With federal oversight and funding emphasizing "science and the black-box of objective decision-making" social studies battled historical purposes across all levels of education and society, with contemporary thought so that "national educational policy" became "an extension of foreign policy and contributed to a continuation and official sanctioning of the war on social

studies" (Evans, 2004, p. 130). The purpose of social studies was once again pulled in multiple directions by educational policy, social ideologies, and the inherent lack of clear direction, and the field seemed to have been "cast adrift" in education circles (Evans, 2004, p. 147). Following the slow demise of the new social studies movement, curricula reinstated the 1916 way of thinking but, due to wider social pressure and without two key civics programs, it lacked "the progressive bent intended by the framers of the social studies" (Evans, 2004, p. 148).

A Nation at Risk and the Dawn of the Standardized Era

Reform since the *A Nation at Risk* report for every administration has focused on increasing the quality of education in quantifiable terms by international standards, and in relation to the economic needs of corporate America (Ross et al., 2014). *A Nation At Risk* (1983), *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* (1994)*, No Child Left Behind Act* (2001)*,* and *Every Student Succeeds Act* (2015) are educational reform moments that, among other things, sought educational excellence through the standardization of curriculum assessed with high-stakes testing. Prior to these government initiatives, educational organizations such as NCSS had acknowledged the importance of movements such as "Back-to-Basics" ('Back to Basics in the Schools', 1974) which promoted essential knowledge that had been absent or insufficient (Evans, 2004; National Council for the Social Studies Essentials of Education Statement, 1980).

A Nation At Risk built on heightened fears of America's international position to claim that "what was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur - others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 113). Amongst many educational goals, *A Nation at Risk* aimed to uplift academic achievement, reduce the achievement gap, and improve graduation numbers (Slekar, 2018). One struggle, argued Leahey (2014), was between progressive educators who believed social studies

should challenge the established social order, and conservative educators (who happened to be in the corridors of power) who wished to transmit traditional American values and prepare students for assimilation *within* society. The 1980s and standards reform signaled the ongoing prosperity of conservative educators and was deemed by many educators to be a politically created educational crisis that ignored any deeper purpose to education than tested achievement (Evans, 2004).

For *A Nation at Risk,* social studies and the other humanities subjects were only deemed relevant in conversation with the sciences. *A Nation at Risk* marked the dawn of the era of standardization, much of which continues to dominate modern education (Ross et al., 2014; Slekar, 2018). Since *A Nation At Risk* numerous educational reforms have focused on the outcomes of education. Some have done so explicitly by focusing on successful, equitable education for all students (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015; No Child Left Behind Act, 2001), others implicitly as the "unstated aim of education for social efficiency" (Evans, 2004, p. 177). Institutional education reform was the order of the day internationally as well. In the United Kingdom, the Thatcher administration introduced the Education Reform Act of 1988 which introduced a state managed national curriculum, diminishing the power of local authorities and increasing national oversight (Woodhead, 2004). Educational reform movements received bipartisan support, particularly when geared towards addressing failing standards and social inequity.

Reformers pursued these goals in a number of ways. Some focused on standardized testing (Grant, 1996) while the vast majority of campaigns for curriculum reform were funded by an array of different interest groups (Grant, 2018). With the education of the nation declared "at risk," curriculum standards were introduced with increased federal oversight to close the gap

(both domestically and internationally) on student achievement (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Students were seen as individuals to be prepared for work and service to the economy beyond education through rigorous content-oriented education (McNeil, 1998).

Faced with a swing towards conservative ideals of education and mass standards-based reforms, educators in the field of social studies education had to decide between adopting new education means and ends, or resisting on the strengths of their own convictions about the integrity of their disciplines. Albeit with some resistance, in the end social studies educators fell in line with mass standardization (Slekar, 2018). In a battle for relevance, social studies education, like other subjects, came to focus on quantifiable, testable knowledge. Seizing the moment, scholars such as Ravitch (1985, 1987, 1989) and Hirsch (1988) highlighted what they saw as deficiencies in students' knowledge of American history and revived the campaign of traditionalist history study (Evans, 2004; Slekar, 2018). With the support of philanthropic funded research and a drive for educational essentialism social studies became increasingly devolved into the disciplines of History and Geography operating under the umbrella of social studies (Evans, 2004; Risinger & Garcia, 1995). The move towards standards-based graduation in civics and history for high school students may have appeased conservative educators at the cost of social reconstructionism and critical social studies (Slekar, 2018). Indeed, renewed interest in traditional history education seemed to offer a fix to the national dialogue of failing education, one that appealed to policymakers and the general public, while academics continued to advocate for progressive forms of social studies education with little substantial effect.

As Slekar (2018) argued,

The big fear that tradition and exceptionalism were being cut from the fabric of American

> society was a mythology conservatives deluded themselves into believing; and at the same time, a more pluralistic, disciplinary approach to teaching history was a mythology kept alive by liberal academics presenting to each other at conferences that merely served as echo chambers. (p. 35)

Social studies' buy-in to standards-based reform was only exacerbated by ensuing educational reform movements, such as that precipitated by the *No Child Left Behind Act* which further emphasized the importance of STEM education and essential knowledge (Evans, 2004; Herczog, 2018; Lee & Swan, 2018; Slekar, 2018). Although *No Child Left Behind* did not directly discourage social studies education, its over-emphasis on STEM subjects clearly provided less incentive for the study of social studies and other humanities subjects (Herczog, 2018; Slekar, 2018).

The focus of education was on the acquisition of knowledge, rather than the experiences advocated for by supporters of progressive social studies education and academic disagreement was largely disregarded as a "minor refrain" (Evans, 2004, p. 170; Slekar, 2018). Yet social studies education appeared to be fighting a losing battle for relevance in the new American curriculum. Interest in social studies has dwindled since the beginning of the standards-reform based era (Lesh, 2018; Slekar, 2018). While STEM subjects have received plentiful support from the government and private sector funding bodies, social studies has received little attention beyond the support of philanthropists (Lesh, 2018).

The diminution of the social studies in national policy, particularly in elementary education, has "explicitly, or implicitly" shown students that "the knowledge and skills associated with our discipline are relatively unimportant" (Lesh, 2018, p. 168). Standardization appears to be fundamentally at odds with the competing purposes of social studies education,

many of which have continued their legacies as charted in this review. What was missing in *A Nation at Risk* was the "portrayal of the citizen not just as an economic being, but as a deliberative, civic, and moral being" (Rose, 2016). This has occurred even though the stated purpose of social studies today appears to be consistent with the original aims of 1916. While social studies like other subjects has experienced conflict over the means of learning and, argued Thornton (2018), the localized goals within social studies, the underlying belief that social studies education should help students somewhat on their trajectory to participatory citizenship has been largely uncontested (Passe, 2018a). However, this disciplinary orientation has at times seemed to be irrelevant for policy makers intent on economic prosperity above other goals.

Social Studies Education Today

Today standards-reform, federal and private funding, and a neoliberal agenda within education have politicized the practice (curriculum and instruction) and epistemology (theories of purpose and reform) of social studies (Apple, 2004; Lesh, 2018). Three decades of "efficiency- and accountability-oriented education school reform" has remained largely intact (Thornton, 2018, p. 16). Since the start of the standards-reform era academics have been critical of testing and accountability measures, although to a largely inconsequential degree (Linn, 2000; Ross et al., 2014). Indeed, the American educational policy system makes change largely inaccessible for practitioners and educators (Lesh, 2018). While the educational system has transformed drastically, "however great the transformation, it does not appear to have resulted in equivalent shifts in social studies purposes among stakeholder groups" (Thornton, 2018, p. 16). Barr et al. (1977) highlighted teacher individuality when it comes to realizing purpose, as determined by a number of socio-cultural factors (see later). Indeed, Wayne Ross went so far as to call for teachers to resist standards-based reform and to maintain personal narratives and

conviction of purposes and goals (2014).

On a larger scale it would appear that little has changed in the stated aim of social studies education since 1916. Around this purpose the educational system has changed dramatically yet, according to Slekar (2018), with an ineffectual influence on realizing the purpose of social studies education: “Where is the evidence,” he asked, “that spending 30 years arguing about writing, refining, and codifying standards for the social studies has done anything positive to help create a fully engaged, participatory-democratic citizen?” (p. 34) Instead, social studies education has become, in practice, “ancillary” to student reading, writing and mathematics comprehension (Ross et al., 2014, p. 36).

However, despite dwindling interest, lack of funds (Lee & Swan, 2018), and public compliance with the standards-reform based era (Passe, 2018a), it appears that we have reached an opportune moment to redress the purpose of social studies education. The election of President Trump in 2016, argued Passe (2018b), has reinvigorated public interest in social studies education. Where people have previously not demanded social studies reform, the election has signified a dramatic increase in democratic engagement. “Now more than ever” argued Dinkelman (2018) “the social studies field needs to press forcefully against powerful educational reform currents that minimize the centrality of public goods, democratic practices, and the very idea of public schooling” (p. 189).

The COVID-19 Pandemic. On January 21st 2020 the United States documented its first case of COVID-19. One year later there had been 24 million cases of COVID-19, with at least 400,000 deaths (Center for Disease Control, 2021). Cutler and Summers (2020) estimated the long-term financial ramifications of the pandemic could cost the United States up to $16 trillion. Throughout the pandemic response, debates played out publicly from an individual to national

level.

Pandemic response strategies became increasingly politicized throughout 2020, with different states adopting wildly different strategies. On March 15th 2020 Governor Baker announced the closure of all Massachusetts schools, later extending the closure several times until strategic, incremental and staggered reopening including blended learning and a rotation of students in the classroom to reduce in-person numbers in fall 2020 (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Office of the Governor, 2020; Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic presented students and teachers with immediate disruption to their education as all schooling from K-12 through college was forced online and, at the start of 2021, remained a combination of online, in-person or hybrid education. Acknowledging "the importance of powerful and transformative citizenship education that *addresses the needs of a global community* [emphasis added]" is central to making sense of COVID-19 in social studies education (Rapaport, 2020, p. 2). Social studies teachers, like other teachers, were forced to "build … the airplane … while flying it" (Ferlazzo, 2020, para. 8). As the entire teaching community was forced online, numerous websites and social media outlets provided toolkits and resources to help social studies teachers. Faced with a cataclysmic shift in educational form, social studies teachers were left to deal with the practicalities of alternative means of education, as well as the very real content opportunities presented by a socially altering way of life. The NCSS quickly put together a resource page for teachers that included practical ways of navigating the COVID-19 pandemic and online education, and useful subject resources to teach about the virus from a content angle (National Council for the Social Studies, n.d.-c).

The Trump Administration. The years of the Trump administration (2017-2021) saw

numerous cultural and political moments that brought social studies education to the forefront of the national dialogue. The nomination of President Trump cast social studies into the spotlight from all sides of the political spectrum, with *The New York Times* publishing *The 1619 Project* aligning itself with the growing belief that one purpose of social studies education should be to challenge hegemonic dialogue, while the Trump administration ordered their own educational response, *The 1776 commission* which sought to realign the purpose of social studies education with "patriotic education" (Crowley, 2020).

Social studies education, in particular, attention to civics, was resurgent in public dialogue throughout the Trump presidency, and encouraged a re-emphasis on the relationship between social studies education and critical thinking skills. This was due to several landmark social events throughout his presidency including accusations of a fraudulent election (Barry & Frenkel, 2021; W. Cummings et al., 2021; Safdar et al., 2021), two impeachments, and an attempted insurrection in the Capitol building (Weiland, 2021).

Discipline-specific skills and critical thinking within social studies have been an ongoing concern throughout its history, whether as an overall purpose, or as goals (Thornton, 2018). These discipline-specific skills include examples such as historical thinking (Seixas, 2017; Wineburg, 2001), media-literacy (Mason & Metzger, 2012; Peters & Keener, 2020; Stein & Prewett, 2009), historical empathy (Foster & Yeager, 1998; Yilmaz, 2007), critical thinking (R. D. Cummings, 2019), and academic writing (Giroux, 1978). The "post-truth" era (Journell, 2017) signaled a popular appreciation of critical thinking and "21st century skills" in social studies education (Wineburg, 2018). The events of January 6th 2021 catalyzed a further reinvigoration into civic education which, in part, spawned the Educating for American Democracy initiative.

The Black Lives Matter Movement. On May 25 2020 George Floyd died at the hands

of four Minneapolis police officers, one of whom (Derek Chauvin) knelt on Floyd's neck for nearly 10 minutes. The murder of George Floyd was the latest in a series of highly publicized killings of Black Americans in 2020 and spawned mass protests and demonstrations throughout the United States and the world. Various strategies have been researched with regards to teaching about race and in recent years a greater emphasis has been placed on the production of resources for teachers; the NCSS maintains a database of "Resources for Teaching About Racism, Anti-racism, and Human Rights" (National Council for the Social Studies, n.d.-d), Chandler and Hawley (2017) compiled and edited volume that pulled together various strategies of inquiry to deal with and about issues of race in the classroom, and nonprofits such as EducationWeek (Schwartz & Will, 2020) and Teaching Tolerance (n.d.) have produced banks of resources that contextualize theories of race and inequality within the current landscape.

Educating For American Democracy. The events of 2020 and the history of social studies has led to the production of the "Educating for American Democracy" (EAD) report and roadmap. The EAD report described the United States as "at a crossroads of peril and possibility," a moment in which the importance of social studies education is more prevalent than ever (Educating for American Democracy, 2021b, p. 8). The report positioned itself on the back of the events of 2020 and pledged to "recommit to the education of our young people for informed, authentic, and engaged citizenship … to repair the foundations of our democratic republic." (Educating for American Democracy, 2021b, p. 8) In concrete terms, the report aims to provide (i) 60 million students access to high-quality civics, (ii) 100,000 schools with formal civics learning plans, and (iii) 1 million teachers with professional development. The report emphasized the funding disparities between social studies and STEM education, highlighting that around $50 a year is spent per student on STEM funding in contrast to $.50 per student in social

studies education (Aggarwal-Schifellite, 2021). The proposal would add $1 billion in funding to civics and history education.

Attempts to Make Sense of Purpose in Social Studies Education

Throughout the history of social studies there have been various attempts to conceptualize the field, to make sense of and categorize its different purposes. While many of these fall under the definitions espoused by the NCSS, some part ways altogether. In the following section I outline the work of Barr et al., Epstein, and Evans, and highlight the ways in which they have captured the distinct purposes in social studies history.

Barr, Barth and Shermis: The Nature of the Social Studies

Written in the late-1970s Barr et al.'s work provides a solid grounding in the historical development of social studies education yet does not fully recognize some of the other purposes that have existed before or since. Barr et al. (1977) based their conceptualization of purpose in social studies around the central theme of citizenship education. The integration of subjects, they argued, is "for the purpose of citizenship education" yet an analysis of historical literature yielded "no agreement as to the essential nature and purpose of the social studies" and due to a lack of "a consistent purpose and set of goals … teachers have been unable to decide either upon the best content or most appropriate methods" (Barr et al., 1977, p. 18). Barr et al. contended that the accepted purpose for social studies education in the US is preparation for participation in democratic society, and that social studies education (with its individualized goals) tends towards this purpose.

Given this singular vision, Barr et al. (1977) delineated the purpose of social studies education into three distinct traditions that teachers adopt to realize this purpose: "Citizenship Transmission," "Social Studies Taught as Social Science," and "Reflective Inquiry" (pp. 18-19).

Educated correctly, they argued, students should possess the skills of citizenship, "problem-solving," "decision-making," and autonomy in a democratic society (Barr et al., 1977, p. 20). Citizenship Transmission, according to Barr et al., is the cultivation of civic capabilities "not only vitally important to the body politic but to the survival of the race"; it is the development and transmission of certain desirable citizenship traits (Barr et al., 1977, p. 34). Social Studies Taught as Social Science is the belief that the purpose of social studies education can be realized through the goals of individual social studies disciplines. According to this tradition, argued Barr et al.,

> the social scientist believes that if a student acquires the habits of mind and the thinking patterns associated with a particular social science discipline, he will become more discriminating, make better personal as well as social policy decisions, and, ultimately, 'understand the structure and the process of our society.' (Barr et al., 1977, p. 71)

Due to an educational (more specifically a curriculum development) crisis caused by rapid "social change, group conflict, and the knowledge explosion," the nature of social studies education was increasingly diverted from knowledge acquisition to ways of interpreting present social dynamics (p. 102). "In a word," argued Barr et al., (1977) "the Reflective Inquiry process grew out of a desire to help children learn how to learn and be more effective at this process" (p. 105).

Evans: Competing Purposes and Ongoing Turf Wars

Evans presented a steady ebb and flow of social studies educational purpose throughout history, one that developed in flux with social and educational change. Social studies education, he argued, has been pulled in various directions over time, some pulls being stronger or more successful than others. Emphasizing the changing nexus of the purpose of social studies, Evans

(2004) outlined eight competing purposes of social studies education including: "traditional history; social science; the mandarins; education for social efficiency; social meliorism; progressive and issues-centered; critical or social reconstructionist; and a consensus or eclectic camp" (p. 176). While these camps competed for control of the purpose of social studies education, Evans argued that "what began as a struggle among interest groups gradually evolved into a war against progressive social studies that has profoundly influenced the current and future direction of the curriculum" (p. 176). According to Evans, each of these camps had a myriad of influences, predominantly social, including the economy, interest groups, politics and war. At the time of his writing, Evans claimed that the current trend in social studies education was to operate efficiently such that it satisfied the demands of increasing standardization. Like Barr et al. (1977), Evans (2004) maligned the current disorganization of purpose in social studies education, claiming it is "an unending dilemma [with] competing camps engaged in turf wars over the future of the social studies curriculum" that requires focused, intentional conversation to unify these purposes free from external influences to promote meaningful social studies education (pp. 177-178).

Epstein: Four Perspectives on History Education

Although Epstein's perspectives on history education were geared more towards history education, it is a useful model for conceptualizing purposes in social studies education given their close associations. In attempting to address and cross the racial divide in American classroom contexts, Epstein outlined four major purposes (or perspectives) that shaped history education, particularly in relation to issues of race and rights. These included, "Nationalist Perspectives," "Disciplinary Perspectives," "Participatory Democratic Perspectives," and "Critical Perspectives" (Epstein, 2010, pp. 12–14). History education that follows a nationalistic

purpose is designed to "instill in the young a commitment to the contemporary nation and civil society" (Epstein, 2010, p. 13). Although this particular approach, familiar in the work of Ravitch (1987, 1989, 1990) and Schlesinger (1992) for example, appeared to be dwindling, the Trump administration's suggestions of a *1776 Commission* (later dissolved by President Biden) was a telling modern example (Kelly, 2021). A disciplinary purpose to history education, argued Epstein, is similar to the "social scientist" perspective taken by Evans (2004) and Barr et al. (1977). According to Epstein supporters of a disciplinary purpose in social studies education cultivate "epistemological orientations" and the "skills of professional historians" (Epstein, 2010, p. 13). The work of scholars such as Wineburg (2001), Seixas (2017) and Van Sledright (1997) are particularly relevant here.

A participatory democratic approach to social studies education facilitates active participation in society both as a student and in later life. Epstein highlighted popular works such as Barton and Levstik (2004) and Banks (1997, 2001), and more recent work such as Levinson (2012, 2014) fall neatly into this category. Scholars that align with a participatory democratic perspective campaign for innovative learning methods that support students' development as engaged citizens. The critical perspective for history education, the position for which Epstein advocated, promotes the teaching of history "as a means to enable young people to develop skills to disrupt oppressive hierarchies and work towards a more equitable society" (Epstein, 2010, p. 14). There is a growing body of research that supports critical approaches to social studies education, most commonly with the overarching purpose of challenging or reshaping the fundamental structures in society.

Epstein's categorization of four major perspectives for the purpose of history education (and more broadly, social studies education) are perhaps the clearest and most recent attempts at

defining the competing purposes of social studies education. Together with the historical overview provided by Evans (2004), and the insights into teacher voice from Barr et al. (1977), it is possible to see how conflicted the field still is. This was all further complicated by the unpredictable events of 2020 through 2022. Social studies education is in a "precarious position," caught between competing purposes, dwindling support in a neoliberal, standards-based system, and a lack of academic freedom (DeLeon, 2014; Queen, 2014). Clearly, we are at an opportune moment to reexamine the purposes of social studies today and, perhaps more importantly, understand the ways in which purpose at different levels of education is manifested in practice.

Competing Purposes: Revisiting Kliebard

The ways in which the purposes of social studies education have been conceptualized exist within the field of social studies education and in relation to general theories of education. Kliebard (2004), for example, outlined four purposes (or aims) of education that have been in direct competition with one another throughout the "struggle" for the American curriculum. Humanism, he argued, or the general development of disciplinary skills, structures curriculum around the disciplines which each have their own distinct skills. Social meliorism dictates education as the means for social improvement. Social efficiency advocates for education that trains individuals for participation within and for society. Developmentalism constructs learning that is appropriate for the learner's psychological development.

It is clear that aspects of Kliebard's philosophy of curriculum theory are present in the struggle for (and formalization of) the purpose of social studies education. Attempts have been made to make sense of the purpose of social studies throughout history, most prominently by Barr et al. (1977), Evans (2004), and Epstein (2010) and these take place to the background of

larger social and educational changes. Social studies education has, on the surface, largely concerned itself with the purpose of citizenship and preparation for democracy. However, there exist underlying purposes that have pulled social studies in a number of directions. Given its decline in standing throughout history, and the recent energy surrounding social studies, it is imperative that these concerns be addressed.

Theoretical Framework

In the theoretical framework I look at five theories employed in this dissertation: sensemaking theory, teacher rationale, gatekeeping, social realism, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Sensemaking theory is used to approach teachers' perspectives on and implementation of purpose and policy, teacher rationale is an appreciation of "purpose" in teaching and teacher education, and gatekeeping is employed to understand the role of teachers in the implementation of purpose and policy. The sections on social realism and Maslow's hierarchy of needs provide context for chapters four, five, and six, for data analysis and conclusions.

Sensemaking

Overview. Sensemaking theory is the "ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing" (Weick et al., 2005, p. 409). Quite literally, sensemaking is the process of interpreting how and why certain decisions, identities and situations occur given their contexts and actors. As teachers enact purpose, their intentions and interpretations are the "core phenomenon" in sensemaking; the focus is on the meaning and interpretation of context as opposed to necessarily explicit (or conscious) decisions (Snook, 2002; Weick et al., 2005, p. 409). In educational terms, sensemaking has been employed firstly, to understand the ways teachers interact with various contextual changes (like professional development) within organized structures such as schools (Allen & Penuel, 2015). Second, to

understand teachers' implementation of policy; how they understand and then translate policy into action. Third, sensemaking has been deployed in reference to student and teachers' content-specific sensemaking (particularly in science education) (Behringer, 2008; Odden & Russ, 2019). For example, sensemaking has been used to understand the ways in which teachers facilitate learning through pedagogical decisions in relation to content. Finally, to understand organizational change, particularly within contexts of higher education (Bien & Sassen, 2020; Kezar, 2013). In this section I divide sensemaking into two key areas: sensemaking and policy, and sensemaking and purpose.

Sensemaking and Policy. The effectiveness of policy relies not only on its legislative strengths but also its interpretation and implementation by teachers; while policy can shape teaching, teachers can also shape policy as they make sense of and implement it (Coburn, 2001; Cohen & Ball, 1990; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). This sensemaking and (re)construction of policy occurs on the individual level and within professional microcultures (Coburn, 2001). Coburn (2001) noted that teachers' sensemaking is influenced by pre-existing individual and collective beliefs and convictions. Cohen and Weiss (1993) stressed that policymaking itself is "supplementary" to existing policy as opposed to being completely organic (p. 227). Teachers make sense of policy through co-constructing understanding, gatekeeping, and "negotiating technical and practical details" (Coburn, 2001, p. 152). Spillane (2004) found that collaborative sensemaking was more effective in aligning teaching methods to policy and standards reform than individual sensemaking, although, as Long (2019) highlighted, such an exercise assumes the alignment of teaching practice and policy is a desirable outcome or one which goes unchallenged.

Social studies teachers are confronted with multi-level challenges with which they are forced to grapple, including policy changes on the national, state and local level (including districts and individual institutions), constant social change, and unique contextual characteristics. Teachers, argued Ross et al., (2014) are at the forefront in realizing the purpose of social studies education. “In the end,” they argued, whatever the purpose of social studies education, whether it is to promote civic participation in the status quo or challenge accepted social order, “social studies *teachers* [emphasis added] are positioned to provide the answer”; or at least manifest the answer (p. 43). These factors, and others, justify the use of sensemaking theory to understand the massive disruptions with which social studies teachers are faced. Literature on social studies teachers’ sensemaking in relation to policy change is scarce and tends instead to reflect on teachers perceptions and reactions to standards-based education reform (SBER) policies.

Grant (2007) found that state testing influenced teachers’ content decisions to some degree, yet was not as impactful on teachers’ instructional decisions or assessment. Faced with ongoing SBERs and overwhelming aids (such as textbooks and professional development courses) Grant (2007) found teachers tended to make sense of policy either through embracing all the help available, or shutting the door and continuing to operate according to their own sets of beliefs and practices. In recognition of SBER, Dover et al. (2016) described the efforts of veteran, social-justice oriented social studies teachers to make sense of increased high-stakes accountability measures given their unique predispositions to account for socio-economic inequality in their instruction. Dover et al., (2016) found that the teachers in their study made sense of SBER from personal standpoints, choosing to “embrace,” “reframe” or “resist” SBER

depending on their context, often navigating between all three responses at relevant moments (p. 460).

There is a sizable hole in the literature that examines the relationship between policy or standards, and teacher sensemaking in social studies education. Therefore, as part of this dissertation I provide some much needed reflection on how social studies teachers in Massachusetts make sense of the new social studies standards from 2018. I use sensemaking theory as a means of unpacking the ways in which teachers interact with social events and policy changes, in careful recognition of the unique individual contexts in which they operate.

Teacher Rationale and Purpose

Just as teachers are confronted with the issues of making sense of and implementing policy, teachers must wrestle with the issue of purpose in education. The education system contains competing demands for teachers emphasizing both the public, collective ideals of education and the individualistic economic benefits (Labaree, 2011). Making sense of systemic demands alongside policy requires all teachers to confront the purpose of teaching on an ongoing basis. As such, teacher rationale has received some attention in teacher education courses, and statements of teaching purpose are a common feature of job applications in K-12 and higher education settings.

Rationale development and the conscious appreciation of one's rationale is essential for teachers, argued Newmann (1977), as it bears at least some influence on the teaching outcomes as entrusted to teachers by society. Acknowledging and cultivating teaching rationale is an ethical responsibility for teachers given their influence on students and the implications for society (Shaver, 1977; Shaver & Strong, 1982). Dinkelman argued that teacher rationale transcends a basic teaching statement, and moves "towards a practical, vital statement of the

aims that direct the very real deliberation teachers engage in as they sort out questions of what is worth knowing and how best to teach it" (Dinkelman, 2009, p. 92). As teachers make sense of "purpose" in education, it is important to note the iterative and unending personal *and* collective aspects to this idea (Shaver, 1977). Cultivating a sense of greater social purpose in teachers is essential to realizing their role as change agents and preparing students to become functional democratic citizens (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

Darling-Hammond et al., (2007) encouraged teachers to consider Goodlad's (1984) four underlying purposes of education when creating curriculum (by which they mean the formal and informal, explicit and hidden means of learning): academic, vocational, social and civic, and personal. Goodlad's (1984) four purposes of education, argued Darling-Hammond et al., (2007) are to be considered by teachers in recognition of broad goals of the education system (such as state standards) and contextual demands (such as specific child, parental, or community issues).

While the development of purpose in teaching may take place throughout teachers' careers, purpose and rationale in teaching is a salient feature in teacher education programs. Dinkelman (2009) and Hawley (2012) found teacher education programs built around the central theme of purpose, called "rationale-based teacher education," to be a difficult yet powerful means of preparing future teachers (Dinkelman, 2009, p. 93). Dinkelman (2009) curated twelve common barriers in forming rationale as voiced by student teachers, including issues such as articulation problems, lack of personal conviction, general confusion, and insufficient means of development. Hawley (2012) found that in the case of three participants in a year-long study, there existed a gap between ideals of teacher rationale and implementation of purpose. In particular, Hawley (2012) noted the experience of student teachers whose schedules demanded a balance between bureaucratic "survival mode" which appeared to be, at times, in competition

with his rationale causing his students to experience significant moments of guilt (p. 154).

Gatekeeping

Regarding the teacher as "gatekeeper" presents the teacher as the crucial director of pedagogy, content, instruction and curriculum that enables student learning (Thornton, 1989). For Coburn (2001), gatekeeping is an integral part of the sensemaking process. Indeed, Barton and Levstik (2004) argued that gatekeeping is most effective for teachers with a deep sense of purpose. Coburn (2001) found that "teachers' professional communities played a crucial gatekeeping role" in policy implementation; after understanding the prescribed policy (whether as individuals or in groups) they "either engaged with the idea or approach, or they dismissed it" (p. 154). Indeed, argued Thornton (2005), gatekeeping may be "more crucial to curriculum and instruction than the form the curriculum takes" since a curriculum offers a series of "potentials not a straightjacket that dictates what a curriculum 'means'" (pp. 10-11). In collaborative sensemaking efforts teachers often dismissed and debated resources (or policy) on philosophical grounds (Coburn, 2001). In other words, teachers' sense of purpose was a guiding principle in relation to their gatekeeping. It would be naive to assume teachers operate as a direct route between policy and student without the influence of purpose and interpretation to some degree. Understanding the role of teacher-as-gatekeeper therefore, is essential in understanding policy and purpose implementation since the teacher operates as the arbiter of realizing both. The role of the teacher in influencing the shaping of academic subjects cannot be underestimated. Goodson (1981) charted the growth of Geography as an academic discipline and concluded that its formalization was less an evolution of downward dominance whereby universities dictated the development of Geography education, and suggested instead that it was driven by the upward "aspiration" of teachers and low status groups (p. 176).

Gatekeeping is of particular importance in social studies education, argued Thornton (2005), because, given the nature of its subject matter, without skilled gatekeeping social studies "degenerate into a flood of information" (p. 5). Evidencing the failure of the New Social Studies movement in the 1960s Shaver and Thornton (2005) argued that curriculum failure occurs when there is a disconnect between gatekeepers and policy to some degree. Of course, this does not preclude other reasons for curriculum failure such as inherent weaknesses (where curriculum may lack sufficient detail, supporting material or is structurally flawed) or inappropriate material (as in the case with the Michigan curriculum reforms in 2018) (Wisley, 2019). Teachers that fail to implement policy successfully do not do so because they are "obstructionists" but because "it is simply more appropriate to them to continue doing what they have done before - practices consistent with their own values and beliefs and those they perceive, probably accurately, to be those of their communities" (Thornton, 2005, pp. 16–17).

Social Realism

The American curriculum, argued Young (2008), has suffered at the hands of two major groups throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Neoconservatives, he stated, have prized the importance of specific content knowledge. Instrumentalists, "under the guise of promoting the employability of all students" have redefined education as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself (Young, 2008a, p. 21). Second, postmodernists, while appearing to provide powerful support for "the cultural demands of subordinate groups," give equal value to all forms of knowledge and, as such,

> debates between postmodernists and those they critique become little more than arguments about whose experience should underpin the curriculum, and the purpose of

> social theory becomes the critical deconstruction of the dominant forms of knowledge associated with subjects and disciplines. (Young, 2008, p. 22)

Young (2008) argued that ongoing tensions between neo-conservatism, instrumentalism, and postmodernism have meant school curricula have continued to perpetuate long-standing inequalities in education. For Young (2008), curriculum discussions have focused too much on deciding appropriate content and rely "on essentially arbitrary assumptions about knowledge and culture generally," rather than "what must be central to any serious curriculum debate – the question of knowledge" (p. 22).

In practice,

> The old curriculum was undoubtedly elitist, its critics, both instrumentalists and postmodernists, focus only on its elitism and resistance to change. They fail to recognize that the social organization of subjects and disciplines transcended its elitist origins as a basis for the acquisition and production of knowledge. (Young, 2008, p. 33)

As a result, Young (2008) argued for a reconceptualization of knowledge in the UK curriculum.

Young's approach integrated critical theory alongside an appreciation of academic content knowledge without the reductive experientialism of postmodernism or the inevitable "discredited neoconservative traditionalist" instrumentalism (p. 27). This reconceptualization of knowledge recognizes the social construction of knowledge as a basis and the ongoing development of said constructs, before exploring "how the forms of social organization that arise from 'cognitive' interests may themselves shape the organization of society itself" (Young, 2008, p. 31). In practical terms, this meant an appreciation of the construction of knowledge and its origins before the observation of these constructs in society. This takes place, he argued, through curriculum that connects disciplines and subjects with the construction of knowledge, the

integration of general and vocational knowledge, modular choices rather than linear curriculum design, and collaborative rather than hierarchical pedagogy (Young, 2008, p. 33).

Underpinning Young's (2008) theory of social realism was an explicit recognition of Durkheim's philosophy of insularity, expanded upon by Bernstein, and Vygotsky's work on the "zone of proximal development" and "the relationship between theoretical and everyday concepts" (Young, 2008, p. 37). Durkheim (2008) stated that social theory consisted of the "profane," the everyday interactions with the world, and the "sacred," abstract concepts that held collective meaning and, therefore, some level of objectivity. For Young, Durkheim's conceptualization highlighted the inextricable need for human social interaction to include both the "profane" and the "sacred," the everyday realities and those concepts which transcend the mundane, the "common-sense ideas" and the "theoretical" (Young, 2008, p. 44). Young (2008) found that "what distinguishes societies" is "the extent of specialization" between these two dichotomous types of knowledge and "the nature of the concepts, and the extent to which they are criticized and subjected to empirical test" (p. 42).

To place Durkheim's theory in educational terms, Young (2008) introduced the work of Bernstein, who applied Durkheim's division of knowledge to the curriculum and observed juxtaposing aims such as vocational education and the procurement of "tacit skills gained through work experience," before employing the philosophy of Vygotsky (p. 44). Vygotsky and Durkheim exhibited somewhat different aims; Vygotsky believed education could maintain social order and promote social and individual developmentalism, Durkheim meanwhile saw education as provoking non-coercive social order "oriented" around moral concerns (Young, 2008, p. 50). Young (2008) concluded that knowledge, no matter how it was conceived by Dyurkheim and Vygotsky, and for whatever reasons, "has transcended the contexts in which it

was developed, in ways that would be inconceivable in earlier eras" (p. 62). He argued that a social realist approach to knowledge and education recognizes "human agency in the production of knowledge" but also "the context-independent characteristics of knowledge, and that the powerful discontinuities between knowledge and common sense are not some transient separation to be overcome in the future, but the real conditions that enable us to gain new knowledge about the world" (p. 63). While knowledge has its roots in social production, its presence and impact must be realized in objective terms to bear meaning. Thus, Young believed, a social realist curriculum can recognize the production and reality of social constructs and allow knowledge to be the cornerstone for evolving curricula.

This study uses Young's (2008) theory of social realism to approach the tensions within the classroom. I acknowledge the push-and-pulls of postmodernism and instrumentalized neoconservatism as teachers make sense of purpose, policy and their unique classroom environments, including their own personal understanding of knowledge as well as their students' social constructs.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

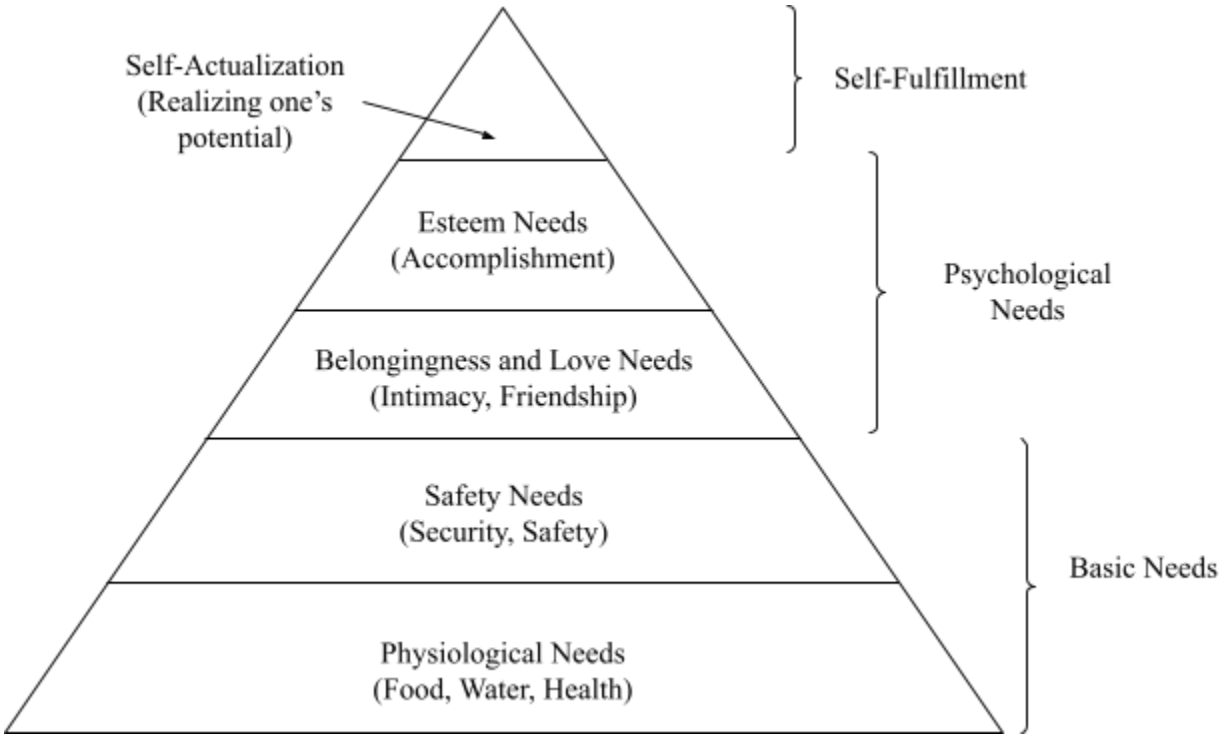
As Young (2008) argued, teachers are confronted with the social construction of knowledge as it appears for themselves and their students. The importance of theory alongside objective social realities was essential for teachers who also recognized the true social realities of their students. Throughout the findings chapter I present the views of certain teachers who pushed ideological aims and postmodern conceptualizations of the nature of knowledge aside to deal with the social realities of their students. I pay close attention to student survival. Given the iterative nature of grounded theory which highlights existing and emerging theory, it is useful, at

this stage, to provide context for future findings, particularly the relevance of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

The hierarchy of needs, shown in Figure 2.2 below, outlines the hierarchical structure of human needs beginning with basic physiological needs and culminating in self-actualization, or in later editions, transcendence. A thorough appreciation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is not necessary here. Instead I offer an appreciation of his hierarchy as it appeared in educational theory.

Figure. 2.2.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Note. Graphic representation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Adapted from "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs" by S. McLeod, 2018, *Simply Psychology*, Retrieved February 21, 2022,

from, https://canadacollege.edu/dreamers/docs/Maslows-Hierarchy-of-Needs.pdf Copyright 2018 by Simply Pyschology

In educational terms, Rogers and Maslow believed the purpose of education was to help students achieve the need for self-actualization. Maslow (1968a, 1968b; 1971) and Rogers' (1961, 1964) humanistic theories of education recognized the ultimate goal of education as seeking self-fulfillment yet the underlying foundations of basic and psychological needs. Helping students reach the final stage, according to Maslow (1954), is possible through providing intrinsic meaning in their learning as opposed to extrinsic standardization which, he stated, could leave students disconnected from their learning. Restructuring education around student curiosity and intrinsic motivation, argued DeCarvalho (1991), is the optimal means for students' empowerment and self-actualization.

Bearing in mind Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and the pathways it opens up for empowered, student-centered learning and self-actualization, it is also worth noting that for some students, basic and psychological needs are of paramount importance to enable any further development. Indeed, DeMarco and Tilson (1998) recognized that only "once these necessities of life have been satisfied, higher needs such as understanding, aesthetics and spirituality become important" (para. 7). They argued that a failure to meet lower-level needs disrupted the process of student self-actualization. It may be the case, therefore, that in order for students to self-actualize, their basic and psychological needs must first be met. For teachers in this study, the desire to promote overarching purposes in education necessitated the acquisition of basic needs first.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Social studies education is at a unique juncture. In order to progress with purposeful social studies education we must acknowledge where we are, where we have come from and where we wish to go. This dissertation employs a grounded theory methodology and qualitative research methods through various theoretical lenses that shed light on the purpose of social studies education for teachers in Massachusetts which has recently experienced standards reform and a turbulent social climate. Given that the focus of this study balances conceptual ideas such as "purpose" and lived experiences such as "policy implementation" and "context," grounded theory provides an important framework for categorizing, sorting and generating theory around these interactions.

Using 21 interviews I constructed theories that conceptualized how teachers in Massachusetts considered the purposes of social studies in relation to social change and recent standards reform. This grounded theory study was guided by the following research question:

How do teachers perceive the purpose of social studies education?

In order to address this question, I developed two sub-questions that provided insight into different elements of the research question:

1. How do in-service and pre-service teachers perceive the purposes of social studies
2. How do teachers make sense of complex internal and external pressures and relate to the purposes of social studies education?

In this chapter I provide an overview of the research design for this study. This begins with an appreciation of the context of this study. I then move into an overview of grounded theory and a justification for its usage in the context of this study. This is followed by a detailed description of the study design methods including the participants, collection of data (and

methods of data collection), sampling procedures, memo writing and a summary of my analytic process (including coding methods), before concluding with a brief statement of my positionality.

Context

This study began life as part of an investigation by a research team led by Dr. David Blustein, Dr. Dennis Shirley, and myself, into educational change, the future of work, and meaning and purpose, given technological disruption in society. Initially, our team identified five cohorts of thought leaders including educational experts, technology entrepreneurs, policymakers, social activists, and religious figures to interview. Later on, a sixth category was added to reflect the views of those at the grassroots level of their communities and organizations. While the research team conducted these interviews, I became fascinated with the meaning and purpose of education as perceived by teachers, specifically social studies teachers.

As a result, this dissertation evolved into a more in-depth consideration of how social studies teachers perceived the purpose of social studies education with reference to wider social narratives and the implementation of the 2018 Massachusetts frameworks.

In 2018 Massachusetts introduced the new *History and Social Science Frameworks* (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018) which outlined the direction for social studies education. In this document, the state declared the purpose of social studies as "to prepare students to have the knowledge and skills to become thoughtful and active participants in a democratic society and a complex world" (p. 12). Given the impact these standards have on the everyday lives of teachers and students, and the potentially lifelong effect for both, analyzing the impact of these standards was vitally important. Teachers function as gatekeepers for student learning and play unique roles in the implementation of policy and

purpose. There exists no literature that analyzes these standards from a policy or implementation standpoint. This dissertation therefore offers a unique perspective on the Massachusetts standards as well as its analysis of teacher perspectives.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a "general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 273). Forms of grounded theory include classical or traditional grounded theory, evolved grounded theory, and constructivist grounded theory (Chun Tie et al., 2019). This dissertation adopts a constructivist approach to grounded theory, as popularized by Charmaz (2000, 2014; Charmaz & Belgrave, 2015).

Classical grounded theory, associated with Glaser and Strauss (2009) but more specifically Glaser (Glaser, 1978, 1998), argued for a new methodology as a means of generating or "discovering" theory from the systematic collection and analysis of data. While Glaser and Strauss differed in the ensuing years on the exact nature of analysis (Glaser favored objectivist claims while Strauss maintained a reverence for deep contextual analysis), their key tenets emphasized "analyzing social processes, using comparative methods, accepting a provisional view of truth, fostering the emergence of new ideas, and providing tools for constructing substantive and formal middle-range theories" (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2015, p. 2). Charmaz (2006), however, criticized Glaser's "dispassionate empiricism" and "rigorous codified methods," and argued that unlike Glaser and Strauss' belief, theory was an object to "be discovered" (pp.7-10). It is "we" who "construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices" Charmaz wrote (2006, pp. 7–10).

Charmaz's differentiation from classical grounded theory resulted in a major breakthrough: "constructivist grounded theory." To distinguish between objectivist grounded theory and constructivist grounded theory, Charmaz (2000, 2006; Charmaz & Belgrave, 2015) proposed six key expansions to traditional formats of grounded theory. These included: (a) prioritization of phenomena rather than techniques (b) acknowledgement of reflexivity and relationships (c) recognition that data and analyses are both social constructions (d) developing an understanding of how *participants* create meaning and action (e) attempting to present an "insider's view" (f) emphasizing the highly contextual nature of data (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2015, p. 3).

This dissertation acknowledges these six developments of constructivist grounded theory. I used them as a guideline throughout the design, data collection and analysis procedures to approach grounded theory from a constructivist perspective. The conclusions drawn in this dissertation acknowledge the construction of theory from converging and diverging perspectives, all of which have been constructed through the researcher, participants and contextual social environments.

Constructivist grounded theory uses abductive reasoning to draw conclusions from the data, forming tentative hypotheses and testing all possible explanations with further investigation (Charmaz, 2006). Abductive reasoning is, according to Peirce, the "process of forming an explanatory hypothesis," introducing new ideas as opposed to inductive reasoning which evaluates hypotheses, or deductive reasoning which explicates hypotheses (Hartshorne et al., 1931, vol. 5.171). Taking into account multiple rounds of data collection and analysis, the process of abductive reasoning facilitates the most logical conclusion(s) to be drawn from the data itself. Allowing the data to breathe has led to competing views on the position of the

literature review in grounded theory studies. Glaser and Strauss (2009) and Glaser (1978) recommended postponing the writing of a literature review until after the completion of data analysis. Proponents of this approach argue that grounded theory, fundamentally rooted in data and designed to produce innovative theory through abductive reasoning, must remain as self-sufficient as possible; any existing theory or literature could influence the researcher "along an established theoretical furrow regardless of the diversity and richness of the data" or limit the study to preconceived expectations and bodies of literature (Dey, 2007, p. 176; Dick, 2007; Dunne, 2011; Locke, 2001).

While these are justified concerns, reasons to include a literature review early in the research process are equally valid. Dunne (2011) highlights six advantages of including an early literature review including: rationale for study, originality, contextualization, acknowledgement and navigation around potential pitfalls, clarity, and robustness in the academic realm (Benoliel, 1996; Chiovitti & Piran, 2003; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 1998; Henwood & Pidgeon, 2006; McCann & Clark, 2004; McGhee et al., 2007). This dissertation is in some ways bound to the traditional confines of a Ph.D. thesis, in which a literature review is customary (Dunne, 2011). However, as a researcher, I recognize that I am not a "passive receptacle...into which data are poured" and that there exists a difference between "an open mind and an empty head" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 15; Dey, 1993, p. 65). I adopt a stance consistent with Charmaz, whereby the literature review invites the reader "to begin a theoretical discussion" by setting the stage for the study, clarifying concepts and situating the study in a dialogue with the field (Charmaz, 2006, p. 167). I included in the literature review two theoretical stances that became pertinent during the analysis; Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Young's theory of social realism. It became clear during my continual comparative analysis that

an appreciation of these theories would be necessary in the literature review to provide context for the findings section.

Understanding Theory

The product of constructivist grounded theory research is the generation of new or reconceptualization of existing theory. Strauss and Corbin (1994) defined theory as the "*plausible* relationships proposed among *concepts* and *sets of concepts*" (p. 278). Typically, resultant theory suggests "patterns of action and interaction between and among various types of social unit" such as groups, across levels of hierarchy or different "actors" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 278). Grounded theorists, argued Strauss and Corbin (1994), are interested in the process of ongoing changes in patterns of relationships, actions and interactions, the contexts in which they occur and to which they relate. To generate robust theory, grounded theorists maintain an open mind with data, accepting all possible interpretations, and test theory with "fluidity" to determine its "fit" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 279). As a result, the theorist can draw conclusions in which, given like scenarios and contexts, similar outcomes are probable. Of course, theory does not prescribe objective outcomes, and successful grounded theory does not attempt to write laws; all generated theory is contextually, spatially, and temporally limited (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz & Belgrave, 2015; Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Justification

The use of grounded theory has become popular in educational research and as such, Strauss and Corbin (1994) noted the importance of applying grounded theory methodology only when strictly appropriate for the study. In doing so, grounded theorists must avoid certain pitfalls in the justification of the construction of their research. Strauss and Corbin (1994) implored researchers to fully develop conceptual categories and remain open in theoretical coding to

generate theory; just because a study uses inductive reasoning does not make it a grounded theory study (p. 277). Elliot and Jordan (2010) outlined three recognized pitfalls in grounded theory research: "forcing" analysis (particularly too early in the research process), analysis based on flawed coding, and failure to move "beyond narrative description" to the generation of theory (pp. 29-30). Given these pitfalls it is important to acknowledge the ways in which this dissertation presents a robust grounded theory methodology and the reasons why grounded theory is an appropriate methodology for this study.

First, there exists no theory on the ways in which social studies teachers conceptualize the purposes of social studies, and there is very little formal theory on the overall purpose of social studies education. This dissertation is fundamentally concerned with the generation of theory that identifies patterns in the interactions between teachers, policy and perceptions of purpose. A constructivist grounded theory approach recognizes the construction of actions and interactions between researcher, participants and the phenomena; this dissertation analyzes these relationships and generates theory that helps navigate these complex conversations. I do not seek to make objective claims about the nature of purpose in social studies education for all teachers, however, by adopting a constructivist approach I acknowledge some outcomes or possibilities that are rooted beyond these participants and have some general applicability beyond the confines of this study (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Since this dissertation is concerned with the *concept* of purpose in social studies education, the generation of theory as a way of proposing "plausible relationships...among concepts and sets of concepts," meant adopting grounded theory was the most logical general methodology for this study (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 278). Furthermore, the research design follows the key tenets of grounded theory. The very nature of this dissertation is concerned with philosophical concepts. While traditional grounded theorists

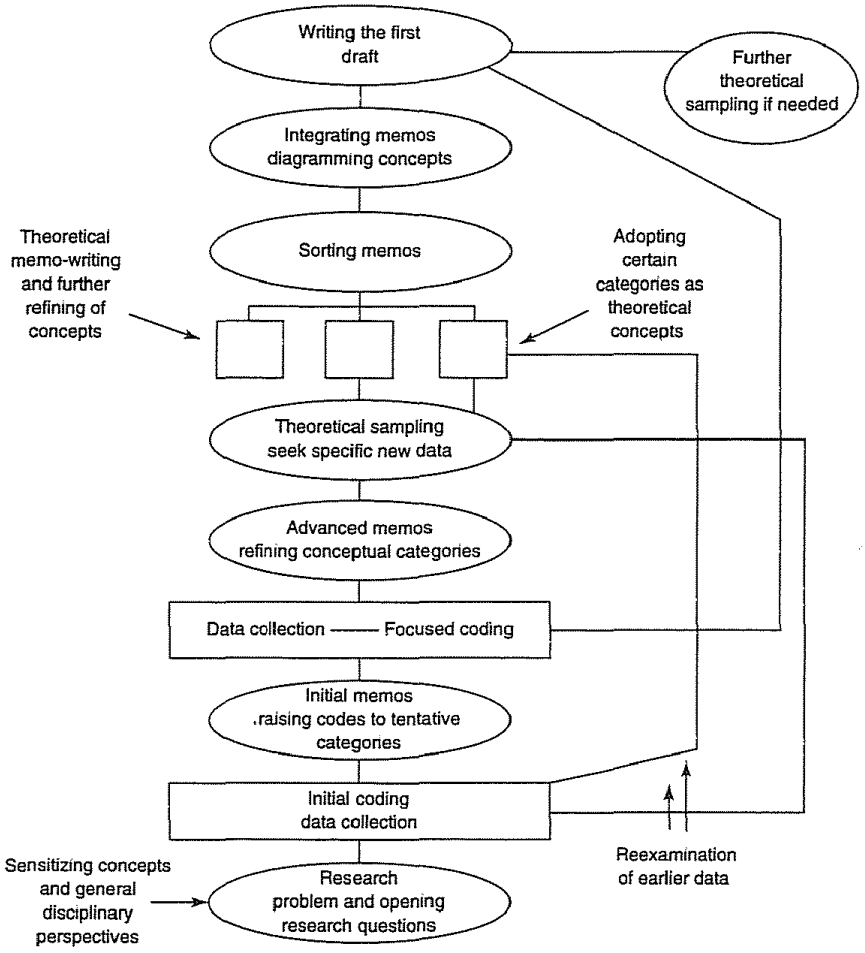
may seek to generate theories about a phenomena, this dissertation begins and ends with philosophical considerations; it is the generation of theory about theory. My own background as a philosopher drives this dissertation, and the hermeneutic propensity of grounded theory suits my own personal background alongside the nature of the study itself.

Research Design

Overview

Figure 3.1

The Process of Grounded Theory



Note. The "grounded theory process" according to Charmaz (2006) shows the stages of coding and data collection throughout grounded theory. Reprinted from *Constructing Grounded Theory*, (p. 11) K. Charmaz (2006), SAGE. Copyright (2006) by SAGE Publications Ltd. Reprinted with permission.

The majority of grounded theory projects approach the research design through a uniform set of procedures. Figure 3.1 shows Charmaz's (2006) process of grounded theory followed throughout this dissertation. This dissertation adheres to the following systematic procedural steps as designed by Charmaz and Belgrave (2015): "(1) collecting and analyzing data simultaneously; (2) using comparative methods during each analytic stage; (3) devising analytic categories early in the research process; (4) engaging in analytic writing throughout; and (5) sampling for the purpose of developing ideas" (p. 2). I will speak briefly to each of these points (combining points 3-5) and the ways in which this dissertation approaches them, before focusing on the specifics of the research design.

Simultaneous Collection and Analysis of Data. Grounded theorists rely on the interpretation and evolution of data from the early stages of data collection. This dissertation operated in two major data collection and reflection stages alongside continual data interpretation. The collection and analysis of data simultaneously allows for the generation of initial and then focused codes (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2015). Following stages of focused coding, and in conversation with memos, grounded theorists create tentative analytic categories and collect further data to explore and test these categories. The combination of theoretical coding and theoretical sampling is something consistent with this research design as I conducted ongoing data analysis throughout the entire research process. Figure 3.1 shows Charmaz's (2006) approach to constructivist grounded theory.

Comparative Methods and Analytic Stages. Throughout both stages I conducted data analysis and memotaking which informed the creation of initial and then focused codes. Constant comparative methods dictate that "every part of data, i.e. emerging codes, categories, properties, and dimensions, as well as different parts of the data, are constantly compared to all other parts of the data to explore variations, similarities and differences in data" (Hallberg, 2006, p. 143). Most commonly, intensive interviewing around focused codes and tentative analytic categories allows for constant comparison (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2015). First I conducted two pilot interviews. After this, I conducted the remaining 19 interviews but adapted the questions throughout the process. Appendices A and B show the major differences in interview questions that occurred throughout the process.

Devising Analytic Categories. By using constant comparative methods I went through the process of developing initial codes, focused codes, and tentative analytic categories. These categories and the theoretical codes helped drive my theoretical sampling to test and strengthen my theories. Throughout the process I engaged in analytic memo writing and used this to help reflect on data collection and drive further theoretical sampling.

This dissertation is based on Charmaz's general logic of problem posing followed by collection, coding, memoing and theoretical sampling to strengthen conclusions and reach eventual data saturation. Charmaz (2006) deployed constructivist grounded theory by "stopping, pondering, and rethinking anew" (p. 135). The theory-building process requires patience, sensitivity and practice. Any production of theory necessitates the interpretation of data from multiple perspectives. In constructivist grounded theory, the resultant theory is "an explication, organization, and presentation *of* the data" rather than descriptive moments of note "*within*" the data (Charmaz, 2006, p. 140).

Hermeneutical Constructivism

Hermeneutical constructivism allows for hermeneutic theories of the interpretation of meaning, without prescribing a singular underlying meaning, and is an approach specific to qualitative research (Gadamer et al., 2004; Peck & Mummery, 2018). Whereas contemporary hermeneutics may assume the "relatively-objective" truth within a text, hermeneutical constructivism in qualitative research allows for the construction of knowledge to be specific to the individual while also permitting the interpretation of meaning (Bleicher, 2017, p. 2). Hermeneutical constructivism suggests that actors do not just point to meaning, but can create and embody meaning itself. In this dissertation, I acknowledge the construction of knowledge from participants, myself and society, but also wish to elicit some meaning that is "relatively objective" across these different perspectives (Bleicher, 2017, p. 2). Consistent with the methodology of constructivist grounded theory and together with Young's (2008) theory of social realism, I am influenced by hermeneutical constructivism that "takes the view that within and through language, as dialogue, people develop for themselves a series of historically mediated, anticipatory, and languaged structures through which the world comes to be meaningfully understood" (Peck & Mummery, 2018, p. 394). Through language and shared meaning-making we are able to approach some level of understanding of one's inner prejudices; identifying these is the job of the grounded theorist. I believe, therefore, that in conducting constructivist grounded theory, I am able to interpret a reflection of participants' inner process of understanding through their recognition of shared language and experiences while simultaneously respecting the individual perspectives brought to the study by myself, the participants, and society. As Peck and Mummery (2018) wrote

> the aim of Hermeneutic Constructivism achieves its complete elaboration as a theoretical position that supports the search for the *mot juste* [the word that best captures the object of understanding] of the inner outlook of the participant, a level of abstraction that is consistent with the inherently unique and deeply nuanced individuals that we genuinely are. (p. 404)

Participants

I reached out to a range of teacher education programs in traditional private and public institutional settings. Pre-service teachers were students of any age that were "not under full-term employment from schools and…undergoing some form of formal educational preparation program" (Campbell, 1996). Student teachers included undergraduate and graduate students. All pre-service teachers were completing their licensure or undergoing teacher-preparation in the state of Massachusetts.

For in-service teachers I used a variety of outreach methods to gather data from a diverse population including private, public, religious, high and low achieving, middle and high schools from across the state. I intentionally sought teachers from a range of socioeconomic and racial backgrounds that taught students from equally diverse educational experiences. I reached out to participants using the IRB approved materials including emails and social media message board posts. I used local interest groups such as the Massachusetts Council for Social Studies, the Teacher Activist Group, the Massachusetts Social Studies Facebook Group and through some snowball sampling where I relied on teacher recommendations. I made sure there were no two teachers from the same school. Participants received a modest gift card for their participation.

Personal and Professional Circumstances. The teachers in this study came from a variety of backgrounds that will have had an impact on the ways in which they made sense of the

purposes of social studies education. Appendix D includes a detailed description of the teachers' socio-cultural backgrounds, their years of experience, the level at which they taught, their academic disciplines, and the racial, and socio-economic backgrounds of the schools in which they taught. For pre-service teachers, Appendix D focuses on the schools in which they were placed at the time of the interviews. Below are two tables that summarize some of this background data. The first highlights the diversity of teaching environments, the second presents an overview of teachers' race, gender, and years of experience.

Table 3.1.

Racial Demographics of Teaching Environments

Institutions with majority White students and minority BIPOC[i] students	**Institutions with majority BIPOC students and minority White students**
4 Pre-Service Teachers	7 Pre-Service Teachers
7 In-Service Teachers	3 In-Service Teachers

Note. A "majority" is considered to be where the student population is 50%> of a certain racial demographic.

[i]BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. While a somewhat homogeneous and complex term, it highlights that the majority of students in Massachusetts are White. Current enrollment data highlights that 55.7% of students in Massachusetts identify as White. Massachusetts Department of Education (2022) *Enrollment Data*. School and District Profiles. https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=00000000&orgtypecode=0&

Table 3.2.

Number of Teachers' By Socio-cultural Background

Gender Identity Pronouns	Racial Identity	Years of Experience
he/him/his - 15	White - 14	0 Years - 11
she/her/hers - 6	Black or African American - 1	1-5 years - 5
	Asian - 3	5-10 years - 0
	Hispanic - 2	10-20 years - 3
	Undisclosed - 1	20+ years - 2

Note. No teachers identified with they/them/their pronouns. Teachers were asked which racial demographic they associated with. In Massachusetts 88% of teachers identify as White, 2% as Asian, 5% as Hispanic, 5% as Black, and 0.5% as multi-racial or non-Hispanic. Massachusetts Department of Education (2022) *Staffing Data by Race, Ethnicity, Gender by Full-time Equivalents*. School and District Profiles. https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/teacher.aspx?orgcode=00000000&orgtypecode=0&leftNavId=817&

Interviews

To understand teachers' perceptions on the purpose of social studies in relation to the research questions, I focused exclusively on conducting interviews since these provided the rich density and multiple perspectives favorable for grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). For interpretive studies, interviews provide ample opportunity to explore data in great depth (Charmaz, 2006). The interviews in this dissertation were semi-structured interviews to allow for the development of authentic personal perspectives.

Charmaz (2006) suggested interview protocols for grounded theory studies should consist of broad, open-ended questions that permit "unanticipated statements and stories to emerge" (p. 26). Semi-structured interviews are advisable for grounded theory studies to provide a semblance of structure, while also maintaining the openness required for informants to open up new lines of understanding to aid with data interpretation (Charmaz, 2006). The interview was designed such that the initial pilot phase of data collection included a wide range of interview questions.

For the following phases, I developed tentative analytic categories and focused codes that help me narrow in and expand upon specific parts of the interview protocol. The initial interview included the following seven sections in order to address the research questions: (1) Personal Background and Context; (2) Meaning, Purpose and Social Studies Education ;(3) Massachusetts Frameworks; (4) Meaning; (5) Technology and the Future of Work; (6) Experience as a Teacher; (7) The World (see Appendix A). Following the initial pilot interviews I omitted sections 4, 5, and 6, and streamlined the questions in the first and last sections (see Appendix B). This was due to continual comparative analysis that highlighted the relevant areas of the interview in addressing the research questions.

The final interview questions were chosen to address the proposed research questions in the following ways:

- Sub-Research Question One: How do in-service and pre-service teachers perceive the purpose of social studies? Addressed in sections (1), (2)
- Sub-Research Question Two: How do teachers make sense of complex internal and external pressures and relate to the purpose of social studies education? Addressed in sections (3) and (7)

Interviews were conversational in tone to ease any anxieties participants may have about the interview, yet directed towards fundamental questions (Charmaz, 2006). The considerations taken throughout this dissertation ensured interviews were limited in scope yet open-ended and allowed the data to breathe, so that the responses of the subjects were not mechanical but genuinely conversational and productive

Purposive and Theoretical Sampling

Opinion varies on the required number of interviews to reach saturation, from fifteen (Bertaux, 1981) to twenty or thirty (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Janice M. Morse, 1994). I intended to complete a total of thirty interviews, fifteen with in-service teachers and fifteen with pre-service teachers since this provided me with an adequate number of interviews to draw conclusions within and between certain groups, as well as generating theory of the total sample size in relation to state standards. Aldiabat and Le Navenec (2018) highlighted the evolution of "data saturation" in grounded theory from the concept of "theoretical saturation," which occurs when the data yields no new theoretical categories that have not already been explored, developed and linked together (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2018; Morse, 2004). This dissertation reached saturation after 18 interviews. I conducted a further three interviews to ensure this.

In order to source participants, I adopted purposive and theoretical sampling processes whereby I sought teachers (both in-service and pre-service) from a range of backgrounds and contexts (purposive) that related directly to the theoretical codes that emerged throughout the ongoing data collection and analysis (theoretical). As I conducted interviews I collected data that spanned multiple demographics including race, gender, age and experience (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2015; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Memo Writing

Memo writing took place during each analytic phase of this dissertation and informed the creation of initial codes, focused codes, and theoretical categories. A sample memo from one interview (Larry) can be found in Appendix C.

Memos are personal narratives in which the researcher reflects on data collection and performs preliminary analysis in conversation with the data (Lempert, 2007; Montgomery & Bailey, 2007). Initial memos may lack coherence but document patterns, thoughts and interpretations emerging from the data (Lempert, 2007). The messiness of memoing is designed for researchers to expose all possible analytical avenues without the pressure of lucid or even coherent writing (Glaser, 1978; Lempert, 2007; Montgomery & Bailey, 2007; Schreiber & Stern, 2001). This "private conversation" between the researcher and data is an essential part of allowing the data to breathe and explicating all possible conclusions (Lempert, 2007, p. 251). Memo writing takes place during each analytic phase and operates in close collaboration with the generation of analytic categories. In the early stages memos can help define categories whereas later memos may document relationships between categories or characterize categories themselves (Charmaz, 2006). I used memos throughout the data collection and analysis process as a constant comparative method.

Analytic Process

Data Collection Timeline

As a grounded theory study the analytic process took place in two major phases throughout. The phases and timeline can be seen in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Data Collection Timeline and Phases

Phase Number and Projected Dates	Number of Interviews
Phase 1 - Pilot Interviews - November 2019	2 interviews - Pre-service teachers
Phase 2 - January 2020 - August 2021	19 interviews - 9 pre-service teachers, 10 in-service teachers

The projected timeline for this dissertation factored in the monumental impact of 2020, including views from teachers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and other international tensions. The two phases were designed to allow room for analysis, coding and memo writing throughout, with the adaptation of interviews and theoretical sampling for additional interviews where necessary.

Coding: Initial, Focused, and Theoretical

Constructivist grounded theory studies rely on constant comparative analysis facilitated by theoretical codes, generated as a result of initial and focused coding. Initial, line-by-line coding is the first step for grounded theorists and involves the identification of actions and incidents in the data (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2015). The researcher asks broad questions of the data during initial coding that allows it to breathe, such as “what is happening here?” and “what is this data a study of?” (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978, p. 57; Glaser & Strauss, 2009) Questions such as these bind initial codes to the data and allow it to speak for itself (Charmaz, 2006).

In this study I used section-by-section coding that summarized actions and opinions (Glaser, 1978). To aid with the coding process I used MAXQDA, a qualitative coding program that allowed for ease of analysis. Some initial codes were *in vivo* codes, whereby I acknowledged

language used by participants in their responses. *In vivo* codes help to emphasize the power of the participants' voice, provide insight to the unique experiences of participants, and can highlight common experiences (Charmaz, 2006).

According to Charmaz and Belgrave (2015), as initial coding takes place, "certain codes assume greater analytic power than others and often appear more frequently" (p. 3). Those codes which appear more frequently or seem to hold greater significance can be used to categorize the data; "through comparing data to data, we develop the focused code. Then we compare data to these codes, which helps refine them" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 60). These focused codes help evaluate large chunks of data and develop tentative analytic categories (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2015).

Theoretical coding expands on focused coding by proposing relationships between two or more categories generated throughout the coding process (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978; Hernandez, 2009). In short, theoretical codes "may help...tell an analytic story that has coherence," moving beyond the possibility of relationships between categories and towards overarching theory (Charmaz, 2006, p. 63). The process of theoretical coding occurs throughout the data analysis process, in which many theoretical codes may be generated, and culminates in the emergence of a substantive theoretical code (Hernandez, 2009). This substantive theoretical code represents an "integrated theoretical framework for the overall grounded theory" that is formed of numerous theoretical codes (the relationships between categories) (Holton, 2007, p. 283). Theoretical codes may include but are not limited to existing theory; I agree with Thornberg and Charmaz (2014) that abductive reasoning requires that any theoretical codes are firmly rooted in the data and existing theory must not overpower interpretation. As Glaser (1978)

argued, the job of the grounded theorist is to ask what's happening here? Although comparison and influence from existing theory is important, it is necessary to start with the data itself.

This dissertation followed the procedure of initial coding, focused coding and the development of theoretical codes as the relationships between categories throughout the research process evolved. Continual comparative methods allowed for the generation of new robust theories of the purposes of social studies education.

Positionality and Purpose

I believe that social studies education has a vital role to play in the lives of future generations. As such, I am inclined to believe that social studies serves a deeper purpose than being a purely functional subject. It is likely therefore, that I may have overlooked instances where social studies represents a part of the educational whole in a more limited sense. Given my background as a philosophy student and teacher, I believe that ethics and morality is the cornerstone of educational purpose. Furthermore, I acknowledge that I am a white, cisgender, male teacher, afforded the luxury of comfortable and high-quality education, and it is likely that I may be overly idealistic in my beliefs for social studies education. My position in academia makes me predisposed to believing in the power of something that may, in fact, be divorced from the realities of teaching. The experiences I had as an in-service and a pre-service teacher may also impact my interview technique.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

In Chapter Four I present the findings related to the first research question, "How do pre- and in- service teachers perceive the purpose of social studies?" To approach the research question this chapter is divided into three sections that explore the ways teachers approached the purposes of social studies education. The first section presents teachers' perceptions on the overarching purposes of education as most teachers framed the purposes of social studies education within the context of a larger sense of purposes for education as a whole. The second section categorizes how teachers perceived the purposes of social studies into three broad areas. These addressed where the purposes of social studies education was seen as:

1. For the sake of the discipline itself.
2. To be applied in some way(s).
3. To learn from and engage with the human experience.

Section two also includes a discussion on teachers' identification of a tension between the importance of skills versus content in social studies education. I conclude in the third section with an appreciation of the ways pre- and in-service teachers differed in their perceptions of purpose and social studies education. The following table gives an overview of these three sections.

Table 4.1

Themes Emergent in Research Question 1

Section One: The Purposes of Education	Social studies are an integral means of helping realize/manifest the purposes of education.

Section Two: The Purposes of Social Studies	Teachers perceived multiple purposes of social studies education operating simultaneously. The majority of teachers prioritized application over idealism, skills over content, and classroom context over state legislation.
Section Three: Pre- and In-Service Teachers	There was little difference in the perceptions of pre- and in-service teachers. Pre-service teachers were relatively more idealistic than in-service teachers who were more pragmatic.

Section One: The Purposes of Education

All participants were asked to reflect on their perception of the purposes of education writ large before speaking to the role of social studies. While oftentimes the responses bled into a more focused appreciation of social studies, four themes emerged on how teachers perceived the purposes of education as a whole; education as growth (n=52), education as challenge (n=9), education as social realism (n=91), and those for whom the purpose of education is changing or evolving (n=6). These four themes were not mutually exclusive yet teachers seemed to favor the belief that the purpose of education is either for growth or compliance.

Table 4.2

Stated Purpose of Education by Frequency

Theme	Subcategory	Frequency
Social Realism	Realism	35
	Preparation	50
	Socialization	6
	Total	**91**
Challenge	Functionality	5
	Emancipation	4
	Total	**9**
Growth	Connection	11
	Personal	20
	Learning	14
	Purpose	7
	Total	**52**
Changing	Evolving	6
	Total	**6**

Note. This table shows the number of unique instances where teachers referred to the purpose of education in some way. Each instance may appear more than once for each teacher.

Table 4.2 shows the themes and subcategories for each stated response to the purpose of education including multiple responses from certain teachers. Logan, for example, stated on five separate occasions that he perceived the purpose of education as helping students learn about social structures and align with the requirements of society (social realism). In paragraph 30 he described the purpose of education as “to get them [the students] so that they can make their own

way in the world. Prepare them for living in the world," followed in paragraph 36 by a belief that "none of the real life stuff was ever explained to me," and again in paragraph 40 by stating, "I wish we could prepare people to…do research, to go to college, to…go out and see the world…but the reality of the US is that people need to work to afford healthcare, to afford a car, to afford anything." In each of these instances Logan expressed a social realist perspective on the purpose of education; the importance of acknowledging and engaging with existing social structures. Each of these statements is counted separately in Table 4.2.

Underlying each theme was a belief that social studies is an integral means of realizing an overarching aim for education. For Roman, social studies was "a pretty prominent part" in realizing the purpose of education. (Roman, para. 16) In his interview, Ted expressed the purpose of education and social studies as entirely shared:

> To me, social studies education in particular, but broadly education teaches not only how to engage in your community and what your role is in that community and how you can make positive change in that community, but the other piece, the second piece, is that it really helps…establish our shared humanity. (Ted, para. 34)

Both Roman and Ted determined a strong relationship between the purpose of education and the purpose of social studies education. While for Roman social studies helped realize "part" of the purpose of social studies, for Ted these purposes were inextricably linked.

Growth

Student growth was seen as the purpose of education by 17 of the 22 teachers, pre-service and in-service. Such growth entailed an individualized sense of purpose and ongoing development in life beyond formal education. Within the theme of growth were views that the purpose of education is concerned with connection, forming one's individualized purpose,

lifelong learning, and a purpose that transcends education. When considering an individualized sense of purpose, pre-service teachers tended to provide their students with a more open-ended idea of purpose, compared to in-service teachers who allowed students freedom, but restricted to options available in society.

Connection. Teachers saw "connection" as an integral means of facilitating student individual and social growth. References to connection were twofold, including connection with the material leading to growth in understanding and learning, or individual and social growth through connection with what it means to be human. Both connection to the material and connection to the human experience implied a sense of trajectory without determining the outcome. Growth in connection to the material for example, was seen as a goal in and of itself with the ends left relatively open-ended but most commonly promoting the development of skills. Student growth through connection with themselves and others was kept equally open-ended, many teachers perceiving the importance of connection as a fundamental human experience.

Students that experienced connection with the material, argued teachers, were able to foster a love for learning that drove ongoing intellectual growth beyond the curriculum. Siobhan described instances of connection as "a-ha moments" where students "are really trying to synthesize knowledge out there that connects with them personally" (Siobhan, para. 2). For Siobhan, who worked closely with students with special educational needs, connection with the material enabled student agency in their learning as they became "individual actors in their own educational destiny." Their new skills could "lead to something that is more meaningful beyond the walls of the school." Siobhan felt that individual intellectual and academic growth through connection with content material empowered students to grow, not just in school, but in relation

to the world around them. This content-driven connection could, in turn, be used to develop desired skills.

Just as teachers saw connection with the material as empowering students to grow individually, so other teachers believed the purpose of education was to encourage students to grow in connection with others. They saw this as a fundamental purpose of life itself. Teachers framed the importance of connection in light of current socio-political events and argued for a (re)alignment of the purpose of education to highlight the importance of coexistence and relationship. Connection with others included instances such as "growing and learning together" (Loretta), interacting and engaging with others in "peaceful" and "productive" ways (Richard) and mutual understanding whereby members of society can coexist despite ideological differences (Kendall, Hiram). Implicit within social connection was a belief that multiple perspectives and diverse community experiences were instrumental to help students grow.

Richard described the purpose of education as,

> To introduce you and expose you to ideas and perspectives that maybe you wouldn't get if you lived in just your one home or just your one community your whole life. It exposes you to other people who have different experiences. So it's not just an academic learning piece but a social learning aspect that goes into it that helps us to interact and engage with other human beings in a peaceful…and productive way. (Richard, para. 20)

Richard believed education transcends individualistic development and is instead inherently social.

Individualized Purpose. For teachers that perceived the purpose of education as growth, authentic growth entailed individualized formation for each unique student. Authentic growth was seen as supporting students to be who they wanted to be rather than forcing them to align

with predefined roles. In the following excerpt, Marty outlines authentic growth as being highly individualized.

> Building a foundation with practical skills but also empowering students to work within their means and determine *for them* what being a productive member of society is. So…that can be going into a family business, that's fine…or going into trades, that's totally cool. So not pigeonholing them into one thing and saying this is what everyone needs to do in education but allowing them to discover their own path. (Marty, para 12-13, emphasis added)

In Marty's response, the highlighted clause "for them" followed by "allowing them to discover their own path" shows the individualized growth Marty wanted to see in his students. Instead of molding his students into ideals of civic participants or pre-defining their practical educational outcomes, Marty wanted his students to grow as individuals unencumbered by social expectations. The support for students' personal growth entailed facilitating their learning to discover future professions, to become "well-rounded" adults (MJ, para. 97), and helping students become independent thinkers capable of making their own informed decisions beyond the classroom. High school teachers emphasized the importance of forging a career path that was of personal interest to each student whereas middle school teachers spoke more to the importance of individual social-emotional growth. Loretta, a middle school social studies teacher, suggested that "facilitating growth is something much more appreciated and used at the middle school level" where "a bigger push has been made in the last decade…of looking at the whole student and more social, emotional growth of kids" (Loretta, para. 18). Irrespective of the context of what "growth" meant to teachers, middle and high school teachers both revered the importance of authentic individual growth.

Purpose That Transcends Teaching and Learning. Teachers that determined the purpose of education to be growth for its own sake also alluded to the importance of students finding a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives. A number of teachers impressed that these individual purposes transcended teaching and learning. Instead of individualized purpose being considered, as above, a student's agency in making personal choices about future employment or personal interest, three teachers perceived purpose as something grander.

Interestingly, all three teachers in this instance were pre-service teachers, who displayed an idealism for students where in-service teachers seemed more concerned with the application of individual development. These three pre-service teachers (Greg, Tom, Sandy) spoke about the importance of holistic child development. All three teachers mentioned the importance of developing a sense of character and personhood in education beyond an acquisition of skills transferable for future employment.

Greg, whose background was in (predominantly Catholic) philosophy and the liberal arts, and who came to teaching as a generalist rather than a subject specialist, specified a "love" for "Cura Personalis," the Jesuit idea of care for the whole person. Greg spoke of "training…[his]...students for life" but not through a dedication to skills development, rather, Greg trained his students to ask moral-ethical questions and grapple with fundamental problems far removed from the standards and procedures of his institution.

For these pre-service teachers authentic growth was a push beyond traditional expectations and outcomes of schooling. Instead they believed the purpose of education is similar to a modern interpretation of the Jesuit philosophy of formation, described by Casalini (2021) as owing a "debt to the humanists" in "forming the student into a 'human person'" (p.

113). It is thus unsurprising that all three pre-service teachers that explored the idea of personal growth that transcends education came from or taught within Jesuit and Catholic settings.

It is worth noting that a number of pre- and in-service teachers mentioned the holistic development of their students. However, in most instances these were left underdeveloped and tended to be a passing mention of individualized growth rather than encouraging students explicitly to develop a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives as the sole focus of their instruction. For example, Jeff reflected on the compassionate flexibility of his instruction when allowing students to take breaks within his classroom as "much more of a holistic approach. Whereas in the beginning [of his teaching career it was]...my class, my fiefdom I don't give a crap what's happening in your other classrooms…now I don't necessarily agree as more and more kids are diagnosed with anxiety" (Jeff, para. 83). Jeff's support of an overarching sense of meaning and purpose is present here but somewhat passing; he acknowledged the importance of more pressing student concerns but did not dwell on this further or make it the focus of his teaching. Similarly, teachers like Susie, Leon, and Marty remarked that the purpose of education is to help "build a foundation for how they want to contribute to *whatever* [they're] taking" (Marty, para. 67, emphasis added). In these instances, students were encouraged to develop their own sense of meaning and purpose in undefined areas yet developing and nurturing this grander sense of meaning and purpose was, itself, not a more concrete concern for teachers.

Lifelong Learning. Although teachers emphasized the freedom and individualism of authentic growth, their goal was for students to continue to grow beyond the limits of their influence. Indeed, eight teachers expressed the importance of lifelong connection with learning and others. Teachers believed that if they could inspire in their students a love of learning in their classes, students would take this desire for growth into life beyond formal education. For these

teachers, the goal was twofold; nurturing a desire to pursue learning as growth in and of itself, and providing students with the means to continue learning.

Tom's interview, which took place in April of 2020 during the early peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, framed social events as "a huge place of opportunity" for educators to "ignite a spark in our next generation…to really take this experience" and "place them on a path to become lifelong learners" (Tom, para. 50, 80). For Tom, the pandemic offered an immediate opportunity to engage students in a passion for learning and discovery which he compounded by immersing his students in a plethora of diverse sources of information. Tom used relevant, current events to help students become self-directed learners which would lead them, inevitably, towards a future of ongoing learning and growth.

As Rava stated in her interview, an "important part especially for children [is to] nurture their creativity and their ability to…question and learn and create like lifelong learners. So that even after they're done with school, they still know how to learn" (Rava, para 11). Similarly, Greg wanted his students to "love learning so much that you're going to learn outside the class and that you're going to embrace every moment as a learning moment…to embrace life as a bunch of learning" opportunities (Greg, para. 42). For these teachers, learning was unending growth, inspired in school to be continued beyond the spatial and temporal boundaries of formal education without overbearing direction.

Summary. Student growth was seen as the purpose of education by a number of teachers (n=17). Of these teachers, the majority (n=10) of those who emphasized the importance of idealistic, philosophical ideas of growth and development were pre-service teachers. While in-service teachers were concerned with the individualized growth of their students, their conceptualization of growth was more contained within pre-existing outcomes; students were

free to choose their careers, connect with the material, and learn the skills to become lifelong learners. Pre-service teachers, on the other hand, were more likely to respond conceptually, believing their students were free to grow as individuals, whatever the context or outcome.

While in-service teachers, for example, encouraged students to discover their own "path" (Hiram, para. 18), pre-service teachers were hesitant to introduce the idea of a path itself. Whereas in-service teachers like Hiram wanted students to make their own choices from the options available (such as career or college choices), pre-service teachers like Rava seemed to want to allow students to choose or create their own options for growth. As Rava stated, the purpose of education is "getting them to a point where they're…independent enough to either continue school or figure out what their role is going to be in society" (Rava, para. 9). For many pre-service teachers, student freedom was in no way prescriptive to existing social roles and left more open-ended; Siobhan, a pre-service teacher, described this process as helping students "feel like they are individual actors in their own educational destiny" (Siobhan, para. 26) as opposed to Hiram's view that teachers should provide "different opportunities across the world to pursue the path they want" (Hiram, para. 18). The subtle difference between these two examples is highlighted in the idea of a "path." While Hiram presented his students with options from which they could select their future, Siobhan left the idea of "educational destiny" entirely up to the students, with no predefined options. She concluded, however, that as it stands "I don't think they [the students] are finding the meaning of their life through school," rather, school as it currently exists, can "help foster a sense of identity..and lead you to something that is more meaningful beyond the walls of the school" (Siobhan, para. 28).

Social Realism

Most commonly, responses were aligned with a belief that the purpose of education is to conform with and prepare students to participate in existing socio-cultural constructs to better students' individual and collective lives, and to contribute within a functioning society. Indeed, for these teachers, Young's (2008) theory of social realism seemed particularly relevant. There was both an explicit acknowledgement of socially constructed realities alongside approaches to teaching and learning that sought to prepare students for participation in a society that recognized these constructs. These teachers exemplified the combination of awareness of neoconservative traditions of education (such as curriculum and existing social constructs like employment) as well as a postmodernist desire to learn about the construction of these realities themselves (Young, 2008). Included within this were three subcategories:

1. Social conformity grounded in reality (realism).
2. Preparation for existence in society (whether present or future).
3. Socialization.

Realism. Fourteen teachers saw the purpose of education as helping students pre-empt or acknowledge the realities of life outside of formal education. Here, "realism" meant the recognition of social structures that presented enough uniformity whereby students would inevitably have to encounter their existence. Irrespective of epistemological debates, such as a postmodern, voice-discourse, or social-realist perspective of knowledge, teachers argued that certain social realities presented enough robustness that students needed to be prepared to deal with them, whether to challenge, change, or comply with such structures. Young (2008) argued that in approaching knowledge (and therefore learning) one must consider both the sociological construction of knowledge, and the existence of these constructions in practice. In other words,

when considering what is of value in learning, policy, and pedagogy, we must balance an acknowledgement of the construction of our structures and their purposes, alongside the recognition that these objects exist and can be challenged. What the data showed is that at certain times teachers chose to acknowledge and prepare students to confront social constructs, whether or not they agreed with their purposes.

For Susie, social realism entailed preparing students socio-emotionally, teaching "coping strategies for the real world" such that "if you don't get the job, it doesn't mean you're going to lie in your bed for two weeks…we need to…learn these skills to move on with bad news, good news. I think that's real life" (Susie, para. 49). Exposure to the harsh realities of life, and the preparation for participation within wider society were a consistent concern for Gerri who stated that "it's really important to stress to students…[that]...we're training you to enter the world that we live in, not necessarily the world that we had hoped we'd have at this point for you" (Gerri, para. 52). Preparing students to deal with reality, for these teachers, entailed the open acknowledgment of systemic inequality and social structures with their students. As Greg argued, "The world's a mess. The world is going to continue to be a mess…I want you to love learning so much…you're going to embrace every moment as a learning moment…whatever happens next." Having acknowledged the "messiness" of the world, teachers expressed a desire to help students learn to navigate the harsh realities of the real world. In Logan's school district for example, "a lot of these kids…are not going to be able to do whatever they want," most "aren't going to become teachers, college professors, a lot of them aren't going to be going to college, they're going to be doing other jobs, trades and whatnot and that's gotta get done, that's just the way things work right now" (Logan, para. 42). For these students, argued Logan, the purpose of education should be to help them learn to balance a checkbook, acknowledge their

situation, provide them with the skills to fall back on should they not be able to "do what they want."

Indeed, in light of the reality of modern society, a number of teachers believed the purpose of education was to provide students with the means to survive in society. Survival must be understood as different to mere "participation" or "success" in society, rather, survival entailed the development of skills required to provide basic human needs and ongoing existence in contemporary society. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in relation to the changing nature of the world of work, Blustein and Guarino (2020) highlighted that the "capacity to survive - perhaps the most fundamental of our human needs - is now more explicitly in question around the globe" (p. 702). In educational terms, this entails helping students learn the skills necessary for basic survival in society. Reflecting on the "luxury" of content-focused instruction as perceived by the state standards, Willa stated that,

> These wide ranging policies are irrelevant when you walk into a classroom in the middle of South City [a low-income area in Massachusetts, pseudonymized] and you're confronted with this student or that student, what matters to me is helping that individual student in front of me figure out their life…My main priority is for this kid to survive. (Willa, para. 102-104)

When confronted with the reality of her student's needs, Willa considered learning "how to cash a check" and figuring out "basic skills for employment" as far more important than content-oriented instruction. The skills for survival entailed basic financial literacy (Willa, Logan), critical thinking (Greg), and skills applicable for whatever jobs students believed they would be pursuing (Tom, Susie, Leon). For these teachers, the reality of survival far outweighed other educational purposes.

Logan's context was echoed elsewhere. Teachers of socio-economically disadvantaged students were forced to reckon with the reality of social and cultural structures. In these instances, teachers recognized the realities of their classroom and social contexts alongside the realities of the wider social world, highlighting the purpose of education as a means to help students from diverse backgrounds participate in and benefit from contemporary American society. Jeff, who taught at a high school with 94% Hispanic students, reflected that "They show up in November from the DR [Dominican Republic]. I teach them and by January they're gone…you can't teach media literacy to a kid who's in one area for three months" (Jeff, para. 64). Given the limited time he had with his students, Jeff prioritized "skills that will help them in their first phase of life, outside of their education…if they go directly from high school, into the real world, or…from high school to college into the real world" (para. 19). For Jeff the purpose of education was a reflection of the reality of his situation and the world into which his students will enter; learning about social structures for participation within them, he believed, gave his students the best possible advantage.

For some teachers, conforming with social structures entailed accepting the social realism of the educational pipeline and, as such, the purpose of education (whether liked or disliked) was seen as complying with standardized measures. While such measures were often regarded with apprehension or disapproval, teachers understood that said measures provided students with the ability to graduate to the next stage of their lives. Hiram said that standardized testing "doesn't do it for me. It doesn't move the needle" and although students won't "automatically…show up in class because you're teaching a French revolution class and be like, yeah, this is what I really should be doing," they will attend because "they know that they're supposed to get a diploma" and "they get the fact that they have to play the game and do the thing" (Hiram, para. 24-25).

Siobhan, who taught at a similarly high-achieving school described her teaching as "based on teaching kids to pass" the state tests because "that's important for them but that's not meaningful to a lot of students" (Siobhan, para. 26). Both Hiram and Siobhan highlighted the importance of a social realist approach to education; although they may not have necessarily enjoyed teaching standardized knowledge, they recognized its importance for their students. Underneath the surface however, Hiram and Siobhan both saw this sort of compliance rooted in a sense of reality as insincere or "not meaningful."

Preparation. Seventeen of the 22 teachers interviewed referred to the purpose of education as in some way preparing students for later life and participation in society. Teachers believed that education provides an opportunity for students to learn the roles, responsibilities and skills required of them by society so they could be unleashed on the world and follow their personal path. "I think as a whole" argued Rava, the purpose of education is "preparing students to be in the real world after they leave school, getting them to a point where they're independent enough to either continue school or figure out what their role is going to be in society" (Rava, para. 9). Rava's belief was not uncommon; most teachers recognized the role education plays in preparing students with the skills to succeed in the next step of their journey. Rava highlighted two of the common next steps for which teachers believed they were preparing their students; employment and continuing education.

Sandy balanced a desire for his teaching to transcend rote learning with an understanding that "the goal is to get a job, to provide yourself a living" so he pushed for his students to "get a job you're passionate about…because we're humans first, we're not mindless working robots" (Sandy, para. 65). As a result, Sandy's approach to practice accepted the commonly held end goal of education (preparation for future employment) and sought to provide students with a

grander sense of purpose within these confines. Similarly, Jeff structured his teaching such that students would prepare for future employment by engaging with his material and learning job skills as a latent effect; “whether they realize it or not,” he said (Jeff, para. 21).

Future employment signifies one example of the next step for which teachers perceived the importance of preparation. For middle school teachers, the next step was seen as preparation for high school and for high school teachers the next step was college. Teachers were concerned with doing what they could within their context before releasing students into their next step and trusting that they had given students what they believed would be beneficial. Most commonly, what was perceived as beneficial was the acquisition of skills that would be directly relevant to the next step.

For Larry, a 7th and 8th grade middle school teacher, this meant “when I send my students off into the world…when I send them to high school…the goal is to…bare minimum, have them equipped for, like, high school education.” Larry’s belief in the “bare minimum” was framed within an idealistic aim for his students to cultivate civic responsibility but perceived his role as providing students with the building blocks to flourish. He stated,

> I am not expecting any 13-year old to know what political party they are a part of or certain ideals of politicians they sympathize with, it's more like…questioning things that have been presented to you, thinking about what you want to pursue, thinking about how you can make a difference and hopefully they can have 4 years of continuing that process, when they actually go off into the real world be ready to become a successful citizen. (Larry, para. 68)

Larry perceived the purpose of education as preparing the foundations for future engagement in a grander overarching sense of civic participation.

Most teachers perceived preparation as a means of realizing social contribution and civic engagement. Ted and Richard both expressed the belief that the purpose of education was to prepare students to be active and responsible citizens once they graduated from high school. Richard stated, "American public school education is about making good citizens. So, helping people get the knowledge that they need in order to effectively be participants in a democracy, which requires active and engaged and informed citizenship" (Richard, para. 21). Such preparation involved providing students with knowledge and skills before setting them free and hoping they used the skills in practice to become active citizens and challenge the world.

Although some teachers advocated for the importance of active civic engagement and challenging social norms within the classroom, teachers that expressed the importance of preparation through the lens of social realism as the purpose of education saw the actualization of this process as existing beyond the limits of their classroom. Instead, teachers within this theme seemed to believe there was a limit to what they could achieve and that, ultimately, students must hold themselves accountable once they had graduated from their classroom contexts. Teachers used the word "hope" consistently to speak of students' future civic engagement. Susie, for example, "hope[d]" that her students would "be informed when they are making decisions" and recognized that her role was to do what she could to provoke their interests. Similarly, Jeff hoped he "sen[t] my students out into the world self aware" and able to actualize the critical thinking skills he developed in the classroom. Richard also mentioned his "hope" that students would learn to coexist and engage with one another civilly, yet recognized the physical and ideological limits of his classroom. For these teachers, preparation, irrespective of its application, was developed in the classroom yet actualized (to a greater or lesser extent)

beyond its walls. As such, these teachers recognized their limits and trusted, in the end, that their instruction had taken students far enough along the path of self-actualizing their goals.

Considering education as foundational preparation was a consistent viewpoint of the teachers with regard to this theme, whether for social or civic engagement, or individual development. Willa echoed a traditionally conservative view, arguing that the purpose of education was to prepare students with a competitive advantage, allowing them to succeed as individuals. Within the context of coaching basketball, she argued that "I always tell my players…the biggest advantage you can have over a competitor is…to have more information than them, to essentially be smarter than them. I think…a good education is one of the biggest advantages you can have." For Willa, social realism presented advantages for the successful; preparing her students in the ways of the system gave them a "competitive" advantage (Willa, para. 25). Willa stated that "the goal of education should be to provide that advantage to as many people as possible."

Socialization. The final subcategory where teachers perceived the purpose of education as social realism were instances where they conceptualized education as the socialization of students or the process by which individuals become members of society. Rorty argued that

> Primary and secondary education will always be a matter of familiarizing the young with what their elders take to be true, whether it is true or not. It is not, and never will be, the function of lower-level education to challenge the prevailing consensus about what is true. (Rorty, 2000, p. 3)

The purpose of education as a means of socializing students into social structures and conventions (whether beneficial or not) was acknowledged by 5 participants. These participants viewed socialization as the stark reality of the educational system, responding with either a

damning negativity or highlighting positive aspects of socialization, such as advancing the common good.

Kendall argued,

> I think cynically, but also truthfully…that education in this country is largely a sorting mechanism…for furthering oppression. It's a tool for…obscuring histories…and continuing national myths about American exceptionalism and racism and classism. I think, like, yeah, for keeping people docile. The banking model of education is the dominant mode of instruction in this country and that serves, you know, the purpose of pacifying people. (Kendall, para. 21-22)

Kendall, a pre-service teacher from a relatively low-income background of Massachusetts, built on Freire's (2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to demonstrate, what he believed, was the weaponization of education to socialize and control the masses. Whereas Kendall believed that socialization is the unwritten, actualized purpose of education, he held a further belief that the purpose of education is relationship, humanity, and "hanging out." Kendall, as with other teachers that fell within the "social realism" theme, expressed an idealized view of the purpose of education (the human experience) in the face of what he believed to be the actualized and upheld purpose of education; social control. Siobhan agreed with Kendall: "We are there to learn certain skills but overall it's really how you interact with other people…there are places where education is to be the best so you can get into another thing that's the best but broadly for everyone that goes through public school it's about socialization."

Conversely, Tom suggested that socialization is not an inherently negative practice. He argued that "when done correctly [schooling] can provide a lot of structure. So education in general can provide…character discipline and can really prepare students to [be] contributors and

agents of change in society." For Tom, socialization meant immersing students within the social environment in order to change it.

Summary. Social realism was seen as the purpose of education by a number of teachers. Terms like compliance and conformity imply a lack of actioned or thoughtful resistance and this was not the case. Teachers often complied with educational and social structures but balanced underlying ideals about education; they married the objectivity of neo-conservatism with the constructed knowledge of postmodernism. Those teachers that believed the purpose of education was socialization, for example, either saw conformity and social efficiency as the reality beyond which they could realize their own purposes, or chose to focus on the positive potentials of socialization such as technological literacy or promoting change from within.

Most common however, was a belief that education was designed to prepare students, in some way, for the next step in their lives. As a result, a social realist perspective enabled progress, helping students understand and navigate social constructs. For these teachers, the purpose of education rested on accepting the educational and social realities for what they are and how they function in society; from here they were able to advocate for change or possibility.

Challenge

Six teachers (three pre-service and three in-service) responded that they believed the purpose of education is to challenge established structures and campaign for change. As Gerri stated, "I feel like education can really be a space where people can better understand how the world works and decide how they want to shape it" (Gerri, para. 25). Teachers in this theme believed that the purpose of education was to reject or resist these social constructs and campaign for alternatives. Although teachers that voiced the importance of social realism did not

necessarily denounce the need to challenge established systems, their response was to challenge or change after having been immersed in the ways of the educational system.

Conversely, teachers such as Gerri and Richard saw the purpose of education as something more immediate and ongoing. In response to the Black Lives Matter protests, Richard stated that,

> I think with this sort of reawakening from a racial lens in our country, you know, people feel like that's creating a sense of chaos, but I would argue no, we just, we're learning a lot more that we before were never exposed to, or those voices were suppressed. So…they had to take their lives in their own hands. And some people now are marching in pandemic protests and such. So… I think that's it. Education is, is all about that. (Richard, para. 24-25)

Richard argued that while social inequality may feel distant its ramifications permeate the fabric of society. As such, the purpose of education for Richard was not about seeking change through systemic measures or compliance first, it is "all about" an active, ongoing reckoning with immediate social realities. Loretta, for example, stated that "I feel especially now that the purpose of education, and why I put so much energy and effort into this career, is really to help liberate and make people equal, um, especially with the curriculum I'm teaching now" (Loretta, para. 10-11). What is evident from this excerpt is that although Loretta conformed with social and educational expectations insofar as she had to teach an established curriculum, her "energy and effort" was directed towards liberation and emancipation.

Changing

For some, the purpose of education was itself an ongoing process of change either in terms of their own personal or changing beliefs about the purpose of education, or in response to

social evolution. These two differences highlight an important distinction; the purpose of education was either seen as something external (some*thing* that changes) or internal (something manifested by the teacher). Leon, for example, described the purpose of education as "going through a rapid change because of technology," moving away from the importance of content and mastery and towards "a way for children to get integrated into this tech world that we've created" (Leon, para. 19). Leon's view that the purpose of education is evolving in flux with social progress highlights an external conceptualization of purpose; the purpose of education is almost a living entity that adapts alongside society. For Gerri however, the purpose of education was specific to her. She described how the purpose of education has

> definitely changed over time because I was very much like, oh, you go to school and then you get a better job. And so that to me, for the longest time was kind of like the goal…but as I've gotten older, I feel like education can really be a space where people can better understand how the world works and decide how they want to shape it. (Gerri, para. 24-25)

Whereas Leon perceived the purpose of education as a conceptual stance that existed in communication with social progress, Gerri understood the purpose of education as being unique to her and evolving alongside her life experiences. Both teachers however demonstrated the belief that the purpose of education is in some way changing or evolving in response to some other form of change, be it life experiences or technological innovation.

Summary: The Purposes of Education

This section demonstrates the ways teachers conceptualized the purpose of education as conforming with, challenge of, and growth within existing social structures. While no teacher held a singular belief about the purpose of education, these emergent themes demonstrate the

different ways in which teachers approached education. Interestingly, there was little differentiation between pre- and in-service teachers aside from a slight idealism on the part of pre-service teachers, and a more grounded social realism and structural adherence amongst in-service teachers. The purpose of education, broadly defined, was seen as either an external force that changed in flux with social progress, as a manifestation of the teacher's perception of the world and life experiences, or a combination of both.

Section Two: The Purposes of Social Studies Education

As with the previous section, it is important at this first juncture to note that the purpose of social studies education as perceived by the teachers in this study was not a unified singular purpose but a collection of purposes, some favored more by some teachers than others. Each of the categories and themes explored throughout this section are interconnected to a degree. In this section I explore three themes that emerged when considering the purposes of social studies education. These themes are contextualized within a debate, as perceived by teachers, between the importance of skills versus content. I begin this section with a general overview of this debate as presented by teachers. From here, I explore each of the three themes and present a summary of the key findings.

During analysis, three major themes emerged on the purpose of social studies education, each with its own subtheme. The following table gives an overview of each theme, a general definition, a list of subthemes (how the codes were grouped together) and a list of relevant codes.

Table 4.3.

Purpose of Social Studies Education by Theme, Subtheme, Codes, and Frequency.

Theme	Definition	Subthemes	Codes
For the Sake of the Discipline	The purpose of social studies is to explore and enjoy social studies for what it is.	Generating Student Interest and Understanding Transdisciplinarity	"Getting them thinking" "Transdisciplinarity" "Controversial Issues" "Student Interest" "Content Knowledge"
Frequency of Occurrences	Total References to Theme 124	Unique Teachers 20 Missing: 1 Pre-Service Teacher	Pre-Service References: 60 Instances, 10 Unique In-Service References: 64 Instances, 10 Unique
Application	The purpose of social studies is to prepare/equip students with skills and knowledge that can be applied in practice.	Skills Civic Participation	"Nationalism" "Skills" "Literacy and Language" "Participation"
Frequency of Occurrences	Total References to Theme 234	Unique Teachers 21 Missing: n/a	Pre-Service References: 107 Instances, 11 Unique In-Service References: 127 Instances, 10 Unique
The Human Experience	The purpose of social studies is understanding who, why, and what it means to be human.	Social Awareness and Realism Social Change Personal and Social Connection	"Shared Human Experience" "Formation and Philosophy" "Realism" "Understanding the Present" "Challenging Narratives" "Multiple Perspectives" "Individualism" "Understanding Social Constructs"

Frequency of Occurrences	Total References to Theme 119	Unique Teachers 20 Missing: 1 In-Service Teacher	Pre-Service References: 69 Instances, 11 Unique In-Service References: 50 Instances, 9 Unique

Note. "Total References to Theme" includes every instance where the theme was mentioned. "Unique Teachers" refers to the number of individual teachers who mentioned the theme. "Pre-" and "In-Service Teacher References" includes every instance the theme was mentioned by a teacher within each group.

Table 4.3 shows the frequency of codes, individual instances, and number of unique mentions by teachers within each theme. Although this is not an exhaustive list of codes, it shows the focused codes that were applied during the later stages of the data analysis.

Attempting to define abstract concepts such as purpose is inherently difficult. For example, the largest code, skills, included skills that were beneficial to the human experience (such as 21st century skills; the development of skills particularly for a modern context). Thus, codes were divided into categories that were a best fit for their primary concern. While 21st century skills, for example, were seen as an important element of a modern social studies education for participation in the human experience, the primary concern was in developing applicable skills and, as such, skills were categorized within the "Application" theme.

I begin by outlining the "Skills vs. Content" debate as perceived by teachers. From here I examine the largest and most commonly referenced purposes of social studies education, the "Application" of social studies learning. I then explore those teachers who mentioned the purpose of social studies education as for "The Sake of the Discipline", before concluding with a section on "The Human Experience".

Skills vs. Content

The dominant theme throughout the interviews was a perceived tension between the purpose of social studies as skills focused or content focused. Teachers believed there existed a debate between whether the focus of social studies should be some form of skills acquisition or content mastery. In reality however, the vast majority of teachers seemed to fall clearly on the side that believed that the acquisition of skills was more important for students than content-related aims. As a result, teachers perceived a common tension or view held by external actors whereas in truth, the majority of teachers held similar views on the purposes of social studies education. In this section I present the perceived tension between skills and content before discussing the common view that teachers held.

The presence of this ongoing debate came through the second phase of the research procedure as I returned to interviews with some initial codes. I noticed that when teachers thought about the purposes of social studies education they were intent on framing their beliefs within an ongoing debate. Of the teachers who alluded to this debate, all but two were in-service teachers, showing that this tension may have appeared throughout their careers or been something they noticed throughout their practice. In any case, the debate between skills and content existed as a response to an evolving technological society, or when the utility of social studies education was brought into question.

The debate itself seemed engrained in teachers' perceptions of the purpose of social studies education. Despite there being no mention of a skills vs. content debate in the interview questions, and me never asking about it specifically in any of the interviews, teachers framed the debate as a central tension in social studies education. Hiram referred to it as "the content versus skills piece" in which he "found [him]self way over on the skills side" (Hiram, para. 28). His

reference to the “content versus skills piece” highlighted his participation in an ongoing debate that he perceived as central to the purpose of social studies education without my prompting.

Similarly, in wishing to align herself as a supporter of skills over content, Loretta framed her view within the debate, stating that while “content is important still at the middle school level…our greatest push is through building skills and building the student” (Loretta, para. 15-16). When pushed to explain where her views on this tension came from, Loretta argued that she had noticed a push in the last decade towards social-emotional learning and skills acquisition for academic success. Teachers that saw the importance of skills over content acquisition argued that teaching their students skills was more relevant to their wider learning. “I will always take skills over content” argued Sandy, “that's just the way I look at it because I think that the skills can be easily transferable and more applied in other areas (Sandy, para. 96). The content is more…nice to have.” Sandy saw social studies content not just as less important than teaching his students transferable skills, but as incidental to his practice. In Sandy’s view, content was “nice to have” and stated this within his belief that “some teachers might think content is more important” (Sandy, para. 97).

Pre-service teachers in particular highlighted a general feel throughout education that they were being moved away from focusing on content material and towards helping students develop transferable skills. This view, however, was met with general agreement and most teachers believed that skills far outweighed the importance of content knowledge. Moreover, content was seen as a route to skills rather than an end in itself. As Ted stated,

> What do these kids really need to know and understand? And that is constantly what I am asking myself. It is not often they really need to know and understand, you know, the

> Kansas Nebraska act. That's very rarely how I would answer a question like that now. Do we study the Kansas-Nebraska act as a way to get at something else? Yes.

As Ted expressed, teachers saw specific content knowledge as incidental or a way to approach more pressing concerns which, most commonly, was some form of skill acquisition. In particular, teachers identified a redundancy to historical content knowledge in a technological era where information is readily available for students. Susie, for example, described how students have become weary with an overt focus on content knowledge acquisition. Her students, she argued, did not see the importance of content-oriented learning in an age where they could Google anything. As a result, she believed that the very nature of what it means "to be good at history" has changed; instead of focusing on history (and social studies) as historical knowledge, it has been rebranded as the application of skills for certain purposes.

Of the teachers that conceptualized a tension between skills and content in social studies education, only two teachers argued for a more balanced approach to the tension between skills and content. Both these teachers were eager to place content as equally important or as a skill itself. Throughout his interview, MJ argued for the importance of the discipline of history from a passionate standpoint. His beliefs on the importance of content knowledge were not divorced from an understanding of the realities of the world however; he recognized the contexts in which he taught (a very diverse educational setting, particularly for Massachusetts, with 95% of his students identifying as Hispanic), favoring an approach that focused on the importance of literacy and language learning, and understood the power and impact of technology on his teaching. For MJ, content knowledge was essential for his students, providing them with indispensable cultural markers they could use to function in American society. Given that the majority of MJ's students were hispanic immigrants, MJ felt that content knowledge was not

more valuable than skills acquisition, but a skill itself. In reference to historical content he acknowledged,

> I understand it's not the be-all end-all for these kids…these kids, they're from the Dominican Republic…most of them were fairly new to the country…at one point we're having a discussion and one student didn't know who George Washington was. So unlike when I grew up, I grew up in this area and, um, by the time we're in 10th grade everybody knew all that stuff…but it's new to a lot of these kids…and I think it's good that they know what happened there [Concord, MA]...it's good culturally especially if they get into a business world and they're talking to somebody…it's good for them to understand it a little bit more…so they don't seem ignorant. (MJ, para. 13-14)

MJ was not concerned with enculturating or indoctrinating immigrant students into American culture. Instead his belief that content was important (or equal to) skills, was based on a desire for students in his diverse educational setting to experience equity in life after school. While he emphasized his own belief that skills transcended facts, dates, and historical knowledge, he felt that for students in his educational context, content was the first priority.

Similarly, Jeff perceived the purpose of education as "to provide students with the skills that will help them in their first phase of life, outside of their education" (Jeff, para. 19). Alongside this belief however, Jeff exemplified an unrivaled passion for his discipline. Throughout the interview Jeff used historical narrative as a vehicle for his points, referring to instances as varied as the flu pandemic of 1918, the war of 1812, the Chinese Exclusion Act, and the Athenian Plague during the Peloponnesian War between 431-404 BC. Jeff's choice to use historical analogy during the interview underscored his belief that the most effective way for students to learn skills was through content. For Jeff, while skills were winning the purpose

debate, it was only possible through a thorough appreciation of content. In his role as the teacher, Jeff saw it as his personal responsibility to make content engaging and interesting. “I can’t compete with that” he claimed, pointing to his cell phone, instead perceiving his role as “cheerleader” for historical knowledge, engaging his students by “break[ing] through the crutch of technology and…present[ing] it in such a way that they’re learning those skills and learning content without brow-beating them” (Jeff, para. 37). Shouldering the responsibility as champion of content, Jeff hoped to engage students with content material through his zeal and passion, something he determined to be the most effective way of learning the skills required by modern society.

The data shows a tension between skills and content was something universally accepted by teachers in the study, with most falling clearly on the side of skills over content. Those teachers that resisted this view however, only did so by viewing content as a skill itself, or as the most effective way for nurturing skill development. What is interesting however, is that, given the teachers’ uniform responses to the debate, it appears that teachers felt the need to respond to a debate that was firmly one-sided in teacher circles. This begs the question then, why and where does this debate come from? While I postulate potential answers in greater detail later, it might be the case that such a debate exists in widespread social perceptions that social studies education is for history zealots and has little applicable use cases. The utility of a discipline has become commensurate with its legitimacy (see later). Perhaps, in fact, the debate is intrinsic to the field itself, exhibiting a dialectical tension within the discipline or within education writ large.

Application

The most frequently stated purpose of social studies education across pre- and in-service teachers was for the cultivation of certain skills, practices, and knowledge that could be applied beyond the classroom. Within this theme there appeared two dominant forms of application; equipping students with particular skills for application, and preparing students to participate in society. All teachers apart from one pre-service teacher made specific reference to the purpose of social studies education as providing students with a unique opportunity to garner skills applicable to their lives beyond the classroom in the present and future.

Included within the broader topic of "skills" teachers emphasized what they believed to be the unique potential of social studies to address certain skills otherwise inaccessible in the curriculum, or at the very least, more effectively than other areas of the curriculum. Such skills included discipline-specific skills, empathy, soft skills (particularly critical thinking), and transferable skills. Teachers framed the need for skills-oriented social studies within a waning importance of the discipline, a response to current events, and a changing, technologically advanced world. The social sphere was perceived as something beyond the spatial-temporal walls of the classroom for many teachers; participation in society was thought to be something for later life following the graduation into adulthood. For others however, civic participation and the application of social studies education required a more immediate response. In this section therefore, I present the different skills teachers believed to be unique to or most effective within social studies education, before looking more closely at purpose-as-application in terms of civic participation in both the present and future.

Acquisition of Skills. Teachers believed that social studies gave students access to a variety of soft skills and discipline-specific skills that were inaccessible or less accessible

elsewhere in school curricula. In the following section I present teachers' beliefs on the importance of the acquisition of applicable skills at the center of social studies education, before exploring the different types of skills teachers believed were important.

The Importance of Skills. Teachers often framed the importance of skills in social studies education as a direct response to a declining importance of content. For some teachers the declining importance of content was related most clearly to a rise in accessible factual knowledge through technology, thus rendering factual knowledge retention as redundant. As Susie stated, "times have just changed so much and now they have their phones and they can quickly just Google, like when was the American revolution" so she was "moving away from fact-based history…and more applying it" (Susie, para. 9-11). Indeed, Jeff, the teacher who spoke most passionately about the importance of social studies content, realized his own idealistic stance towards the inherent beauty of social studies content and declared that the purpose of "modern day education is to provide students with skills that will help them in their first phase of life, outside of their education" (Jeff , para. 19). Jeff's reference to "modern" education not only highlights his response to technological change but widespread educational change that has shifted from fact-based-learning to pragmatic learning. Indeed, as will be discussed throughout Chapter Six, this is emblematic of a trend in teachers' perceptions that the purpose of education was less about the intrinsic value of knowledge but underscored by pragmatism. Even for teachers for whom the purpose of social studies education was more closely aligned with the human experience or content knowledge, the acquisition of skills was an essential component of social studies education.

Soft Skills. The following table displays every coded category of skill mentioned throughout the interviews alongside its frequency.

Table 4.4.

Types of Skills Accessible Through Social Studies Education

Skill	Definition	Frequency	Unique Teachers
Critical Thinking	Teaching students to think critically about the world with which they are presented, particularly texts and multimedia	40	15
Perspective Taking	Helping students engage with multiple perspectives	26	13
21st Century Skills	Skills most relevant to life in the 21st century including but not limited to technological, media, and digital literacy	17	12
History-Specific Skills	Skills developed entirely related to history education (eg. presentism)	12	9
Argumentation/ Discussion	Allowing students to develop debating skills	8	6
Empathy/Receptivity	Helping students develop a sense of empathy and receptivity towards others	5	2
Socio-Cultural	The skills to interpret human interaction (see the following section on the human experience)	5	4
Inter/Intra-Personal	The ability to interact with other human beings	4	4
(in)Dependency	Providing students with the skills to work/live as autonomous individuals	4	3
Forming Opinions	Encouraging students to form and share opinions	3	3
Transferable Skills	Providing students with skills that can be used in other disciplines	2	2

Note. The definitions provided in this table emerged from the data itself. For the purposes of this dissertation I provide widely accepted definitions below for the most common topics including 21st century skills, critical thinking, and perspective taking.

As can be seen from Table 4.4., teachers perceived a number of different skills, the majority of which fall under the category of "soft-skills." Soft skills, according Heckman and Kautz (2012) are "personality traits, goals, motivations, and preferences that are valued in the labor market, schools, and other domains" (p. 451). Alex (2012) argued that, given the impact of technology, organizations and professions are increasingly emphasizing the importance of soft skills such as "interpersonal skills…team working…negotiation…communication…time management…stress management" (pp. 5-6). Modern social and professional landscapes require "people who are extroverted, who are good in marketing themselves, and who are socializing easily are rated superior to others who lack those attributes" (Schulz, 2008, p. 151). In educational terms, argued Schulz (2008), this necessitates a move away from lecture-style education and towards student-led pedagogy. For the purposes of this dissertation I will focus on the importance of the two major themes that emerged from the data and fall within this category of soft skills; critical thinking and 21st century skills.

Critical thinking emerged as the largest category of skills for teachers who perceived the purpose of social studies as providing students with applicable knowledge. The role of critical thinking in social studies education can be charted throughout the development of the discipline. For example, Giroux (1978) argued for a pedagogy of critical thinking in social studies education. Shiveley and Vanfossen (1999) framed critical thinking in social studies within the rise of the internet age. Elder and Paul (2008) argued in NCSS' own *Social Education* journal that "it is within the social studies classroom" that students develop critical thinking skills to

make sense of a rapidly changing world (p. 391). Critical thinking can be understood as a combination of "a certain skepticism, or suspension of assent, towards a given statement, established norm or mode of doing things," followed by consideration of "alternative hypotheses and possibilities," before a conclusion is reached which may or may not be the same as the original problem (McPeck, 1981, p. 5). Participants in this study believed that social studies is "one of the few spaces that encourage critical thinking" (Gerri, para. 11). Indeed, social studies education was routinely referred to as the natural home for critical thinking due to the nature of its content material and inherent connection with social change, particularly with regards to the era of misinformation and fake news. Of the 15 teachers that mentioned the importance of critical thinking, 10 referred explicitly to the importance of questioning articles and multimedia. The remaining five referred to a connection between the need for critical thinking and ongoing dialogue. The teachers all believed that social studies and critical thinking skills are inherently linked with one another and can be deployed to empower students to respond to contemporary social issues whether such as misinformation and (multi)media literacies, current events, or interactions with others.

Teachers believed that critical thinking was at the core of social studies education. Ted, for example, stated that despite ongoing changes in American society, from policy and school pressures, a constant throughout his teaching was the importance of critical thinking. He stated, "to me, it's really about… I want them to be able to think critically and ask questions. Don't just ingest anything that they see on a screen and assume it's true and assume as real [sic]" (Ted, para. 83-84). Asking questions was a constant theme for teachers who believed in the importance of critical thinking. For these teachers, the purpose of social studies was not necessarily to provide students with answers but instead to provoke a desire to question and consider material with

which they were presented before making a decision for themselves. Critical thinking, teachers believed, allowed students to make reasoned and informed decisions for themselves, in resistance to and informed by external influences. Teachers such as Larry expressed the fine line between indoctrination and inspiring change all while encouraging "logical experimentation…questioning [and] analysis" (Larry, para. 24).

21st Century Skills, argued Trilling and Fadel (2009), refers to a reconceptualization of traditional skills such as "critical thinking and problem solving" as manifested in the 21st century in light of rapid socio-economic changes such as digitization and innovation (pp. xxiii-xxiv). Unsurprisingly, given the overwhelming support for critical thinking within social studies education, teachers also saw social studies education as the natural home to cultivate 21st century skills within students for application in the real world. For Gerri, Jeff, Leon, Roman, Susie, and Willa, 21st century skills were synonymous with finding good sources or not trusting the internet. Such teachers believed social studies to be on the front lines, providing students with the space to practice 21st century skills (Leon).

The acquisition of skills, particularly the importance of critical thinking, was the most commonly recurring belief for the purpose of social studies throughout the interviews. Teachers believed that given ongoing current events such as the age of misinformation and political turbulence, encouraging students to develop as critical thinkers in the 21st century was essential. The social studies classroom was seen as a vital practice field for the cultivation and inevitable application of these skills.

Participation. Alongside the application of skills (and often as the manifestation of certain skills) teachers perceived the purpose of social studies as working towards some form of civic participation. Indeed, the theme of civic participation as a subset of application was

mentioned throughout every single interview, with some teachers claiming it to be the most important purpose for social studies education. In general, teachers saw the role of social studies as preparing students to become informed, functioning, democratic citizens that could address important issues and take action to campaign for social change in a globally connected, diverse society. This overarching statement highlights three categories that emerged in terms of how teachers perceived the role of social studies in addressing civic participation. The following table provides a definitional overview of each category and a breakdown of the number of unique teachers and total instances each category appeared.

Table 4.5.

Categories of Civic Participation in Social Studies Education

Category	Definition	Frequency	Unique Teachers
Global, Diverse Society	Where social studies was believed to help students engage with diverse local, national, and global societies	Total: 16 Pre-Service: 6 In-Service:10	12
Action	Teachers perceived the purpose of social studies as encouraging students to take an active role in civic participation to promote social change	Total: 24 Pre-Service:10 In-Service:14	14
The Democratic Process	Social studies was believed to empower students for participation in democratic processes such as voting and citizenship	Total: 27 Pre-Service: 8 In-Service: 19	15

Interestingly, Table 4.5 shows a slight disparity between the number of pre- and in-service teachers, particularly in terms of their views on “the democratic process.” While more in-service teachers affiliated themselves with the idea of civic participation than pre-service

teachers, the disparity in numbers is slight. In section three of this chapter, I provide a more thorough analysis of the differences between pre- and in-service teachers. In this section I provide a brief overview of each category which together helps understand how teachers perceived civic participation as preparation for active, democratic citizenship in a globally connected world.

Global, Diverse Society. Teachers that believed social studies should help students engage with a diverse, global society emphasized the importance of the social beyond the individual. Sixteen teachers shared the view that social studies could help students shed narrow-minded individualized perspectives and instead focus on a wider social collective. In presenting global perspectives teachers believed that their students would benefit from diverse worldviews and thus reduce sentiments of xenophobia and ignorance, and gain a wider appreciation for civic participation in a modern, connected world. “We have this idea” argued Ted, “of the American rugged individualism, but if you don't understand how you work as part of a community, you will not be able to have a successful society in my opinion” (para. 33.) For Ted, like other teachers, this “community” was not a hyper-localized community, but “our shared humanity in our global community and our national community and our local community” (Ted, para. 35). By engaging with diverse, global communities, teachers believed students would develop a sensitivity to the other which, in reality, did not necessarily mean unity or agreement but just a thoughtfulness to “exchange ideas in a civil way” (Marty, para. 20).

Action. Participation-as-action has received a lot of recent attention, particularly in Massachusetts, with the recent 2018 standards reform and the 2021 “Civics Project Guidebook” which provided teachers with strategies to implement effective civics projects (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021). A more thorough appreciation of

the Massachusetts frameworks, particularly teachers' interactions with the 8th grade civics project program, is dealt with in Chapter Five. It is worth noting here that the 8th grade civics project is a student-led action civics project integrated within a new year-long civics curriculum.

A number of teachers referred in passing to “action” in civics, highlighting a belief that civics and social studies education naturally implied some form of eventual action to be taken by their students. Indeed, phrases such as encouraging students to “become active citizens in a democratic society” did not dwell on the importance of “action” but instead held it as an implicit facet of social studies education (Sandy, para. 54). For the 14 teachers within this category, action was both the most effective means of understanding the democratic process and a pathway for social change. Teachers believed that for students to grow as adults committed to social evolution, engaging them with active civic participation throughout their social studies education was essential. The “goal,” argued Larry, “would be to have them begin to formulate the type of world they want to live in.” This engagement with active social change often related to the Massachusetts 8th grade civics project, integrated experiential projects in which students were encouraged to take action in response to pressing local issues such as writing to governors or attending various organized student debates.

The Democratic Process. A slight disparity existed between the number of pre- and in-service teachers that referred to the purpose of social studies as provoking student engagement with (and in) the democratic process. In-service teachers routinely perceived students as immature citizens, who needed practice to become full democratic citizens through college and into adult life. MJ described this graduation-style process as,

> You want to train them to be knowledgeable adults, um, competent, you know, they're going to be citizens…and they're going to vote and they're going to lead their lives and you're giving them some sort of a basis to use when they're adults. (MJ, para. 25)

MJ suggested that social studies education was concerned with "training" students for future engagement in the democratic process.

Other pre-service teachers expressed similar viewpoints, presenting students as future voters; "I've more of a view in terms of what the students will be like when they're voting, when they turn 18 and hopefully they'll want to vote and be engaged," (Susie, para. 7) or as democracy-ready young people; "we're teaching kids how to develop their own identity and use that voice in a productive way that helps everyone and prepares them to be members of our democracy" (Loretta, para. 51-52). Ted argued that "I really think that, um, we need to prepare kids to be able to go out into the world and into our communities and try and restrengthen a democracy that we have weakened" (Ted, para. 85).

Irrespective of how teachers perceived student readiness or preparation, both in- and pre-service teachers in this category believed that social studies education could help students realize their potential as actors within a democratic system and, in turn, encourage them to become active citizens that could shape and strengthen democracy. Furthermore, teachers encouraged their students to recognize the limits and failures of the democratic process to allow for change.

Teachers within the theme of civic participation believed that social studies education was ideally placed as a means of helping students develop the skills and practices to become thoughtful and informed citizens, most commonly in their life beyond school, through a range of pedagogical approaches. For most teachers civic participation necessitated an active component

which transcended the 8th grade mandatory civics curriculum and was built into the very notion of social studies itself. Interestingly, although teachers believed that civic action was an integral part of social studies education teachers still believed that citizenship was something students engaged with after graduating from high school or college.

The Sake of the Discipline

In this section I explore a number of responses that expressed a belief that the purpose of social studies was to experience and engage with the discipline itself. The majority of these discussions highlighted the importance and often misunderstood nature of social studies content, exploring the power and potential of social studies material as a subject of interest and engagement. Teachers were eager to share their positive experiences of history education as students and a desire for their students to have the same in the face of a commonly held belief that the general public views history and social studies education as dry, boring, and simple recitation of facts and dates.

Instead, teachers in this theme believed social studies education could be an engaging and exciting discipline through evolving, creative pedagogy, and dealing with interesting material such as exciting and relevant historical events, and controversial issues. Alongside these views was a belief that social studies education is the most accessible way for students to understand the present and to avoid the mistakes of the past. That being said, teachers, on the whole, recognized the limits of social studies content, instead proposing more relevant outcomes achieved through a disciplinary-focused approach to the study of social studies. In this section, I first explore teachers' beliefs on the importance of social studies content, including an appreciation of personal and student interest, the relevance of the discipline, and a brief outline

of the ways in which the role of content in social studies education was being reimagined, before a summary of the transdisciplinary nature of social studies education.

Teachers' Experiences. Teachers that believed the purpose of social studies was in some ways to engage with the discipline itself showed a passion and personal connection to social studies content-as-purpose. These teachers believed that the purpose of social studies was to engage with social studies for the sake of the discipline itself. Teachers reflected on their own personal experiences of social studies education, the majority for whom social studies education was a fascinating and engaging subject. As a result, teachers were eager for their students to experience the same joy for educational material as they did. In the following excerpt, MJ, an older pre-service teacher reminisced about his experience as a history student and how this directly contributed to his decision, not only to teach history and social studies, but to foster in his students a love of the discipline:

> I can tell you exactly…fourth grade was the first history class I ever had back then when…I went to school and I loved it. Then at the, um, at the end of the year…we went to Lexington and Concord… It absolutely blew my mind that this stuff I had been learning in school was right here. It was right in my neighborhood. I've always loved it. I still, I go to, I love Concord in particular. I go to the north bridge. I probably go there two or three times a year. I love it. I go back, I stand on it. I look around, I read things…I've always loved history. It's always been my favorite subject. And when I decided to go back to school I knew I was going to go back to study history and social studies. And again, with these students that I have, um, uh, they need, they need, they need education. All of that. You know, they come to it with a lot less, um, background knowledge, say, than somebody who grew up in the school systems here, and by the time they get to the

> 10th grade did have a good idea of a lot of that stuff. These kids don't. It's a very special part of the world to be in and to be in a place where you can literally live the history of the birth of a nation, I guess. (MJ , Para. 16-21)

MJ, who taught in a relatively low-income area of Massachusetts to primarily immigrant students, built from the formative experiences of his social studies education and combined this with an ongoing love for social studies content. Added to this, MJ saw it as his duty to engage students with the history surrounding them, in part (as I mentioned previously) to help students' cultural literacy, for the purpose of enjoying and experiencing the discipline of social studies itself. Indeed, a number of teachers alluded to their own educational experiences as a driving factor in their desire to connect students with social studies content. Rava, Jeff, MJ, Roman, Willa, Greg, Sandy, Susie, Marty, and Larry all reminisced positively about their social studies education experience, using variations of the phrase "I loved history in school" and described their decision to become social studies teachers as what seemed to "make sense." Roman, for example, stated, "I remember saying I want to become a social studies teacher. That's what I enjoyed as a kid. I still enjoy it now" (Roman, para. 64).

Of all the teachers, Jeff was most outspoken about his love for history and a hope that his students would feel the same, all the while grounded in a realism that it may not be interesting for everyone. In his interview, Jeff used passionate historical analogies to illustrate his points, adopting a revisionist approach to history and presenting me with what he considered to be (and were) compelling historical narratives. Jeff's intention, as with his students, was to emphasize what he considered to be fascinating and relevant details about historical events. When pushed for a reason why this was his approach, Jeff argued that in a normal history class "you never get to [those] points[s]. That sort of stuff is exciting to me and that would get the students interested"

(Jeff, para. 17). As is evident, Jeff perceived the purpose of social studies education as exploring the discipline itself for intrinsically engaging content.

Generating Student Interest. The innate joy of social studies education was common throughout the interviews, with Willa for example, suggesting that "there's no such thing as someone who doesn't like history. I mean, history is just stories right?! Anyone who says they don't like history just hasn't found the right history yet!" (Willa, para. 31) In this excerpt Willa also highlighted an interesting undercurrent for social studies teachers. While they acknowledged their own passion for subject material, this was often framed within a wider perception that social studies is unfairly misunderstood as a dry and boring subject.

Gerri, for example, noted that while her educational experience was extremely positive, as a woman of color she recognized that her positive educational experience with history education may not have been the norm. Indeed, teachers that alluded to a love of history or spoke of their education experiences framed their passion within a common dialogue that social studies education, particularly history, is dry and boring. Returning to Jeff once more, he recalled the fictional character of Professor Binns in Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, stating that "one of the reasons I became a history teacher is because I loved history and I found that even among my own peers people don't really like history. They don't like *history class* history" (Jeff, para. 10, emphasis added). When Jeff mentioned "history class history" he differentiated what he considered to be real, engaging history with history as it is presented in K-12 classrooms. He continued, arguing that he didn't,

> Want to be the Harry Potter history teacher. And what I mean by that is in Harry Potter, the history teacher goes to class one day, teaches the history of artworks, dies and then his

> ghost just picks up the next day. Like even that droning of dates in names. (Jeff , Para. 44-45)

As a result of beliefs such as these, teachers concluded that it was their role to engage students with the disciplinary potential of social studies education by generating student interest and engagement. In order to do so, teachers took it upon themselves to incorporate diverse pedagogical practices such as becoming the master storyteller (Jeff), ensuring knowledge was not "just imparted on" students (Connor, para. 42), and incorporating controversial issues within their practice. A further eight teachers highlighted the importance of student-led learning instead of teacher-led rote learning, direct instruction, or lecture-style teaching. As a result, teachers felt that such approaches presented students with more engaging ways of learning and accessing the content.

Understanding the Present. Further to their belief that social studies education can be intrinsically interesting and purposeful, teachers considered social studies education to be the most effective means of understanding the present as a manifestation of the past and, as such, a way to avoid previous mistakes. Understanding the present in this instance was not associated with social betterment per se (there is a longer discussion on social improvement in the later section on "The Human Experience"), rather for these teachers, understanding the present evoked a sense of recognizing historical significance. As Gerri argued, if students "grow up and they become the politicians or leaders in whatever field that they're in…they [will] have the ability to understand…what is the historical significance of doing these things?" (Gerri, para. 39) Roman described this phenomenon as "connecting the dots" between the past and the present (Roman, para. 67). For these teachers the purpose of social studies education was to understand, broadly speaking, "how we got here" (Greg, para. 51) and why "people… did the crazy stuff that

affects us today" (Ted, para. 36). From here, teachers suggested the various ways understanding the present through the past could be applied. Most commonly an understanding of the present was perceived as an opportunity to shape the future, falling along a popular line that social studies education can help students break harmful repetitive cycles. Sandy, for example, stated that "essentially the purpose of history is…that those who do not know their history are doomed to repeat it because essentially we're seeing now that oftentimes people don't quite realize how…what's going on now is repeating from the past" (Sandy, Para. 24-25). As such, teachers like Sandy believed that the purpose of social studies education was, by engaging students in the discipline, to both understand their place in a grand historical narrative, revise their present stance, and thereby shape the future. In general, teachers' perceptions on the importance of content knowledge and understanding historical significance was approached with caution by teachers for whom historical narrative was problematic. Richard highlighted a sour taste when placing students within a historical context, arguing that over-compliance within disciplinary history can lead to "obsessive nationalistic pride" which has caused a great deal of pushback from social studies educators.

Limits of Content. While all teachers showed a passion for their discipline and some foregrounded this as their priority in teaching social studies education, the vast majority of teachers recognized content-knowledge not as an end-goal but "nice", "idealistic", and a means to accessing deeper purposes. Some of these deeper purposes, such as connection to the human experience and the application of learning are dealt with in later sections. However, a number of teachers expressed a general desire to use social studies content to catalyze student thinking.

Rava, a pre-service teacher at a large state university teaching in a diverse middle school environment, provided a summary of how teachers perceived the relationship between disciplinary content knowledge and a deeper purpose for social studies education. She stated,

> I mean, content, obviously that's like what the standards are, and obviously what students need to know. That's what the subject is, but also more important I would say is presenting content in a way that engages the students and allows them to think when you get to that higher-level thinking. (Rava, para. 18)

Teachers for whom content knowledge played an important role in their teaching shared Rava's belief that content is "what the subject is," yet the purpose of social studies was perceived as something accessible through content. For Rava and the vast majority of teachers, content was a vehicle for accessing other purposes such as "higher-level thinking." Even for those teachers who valued the importance of content knowledge their beliefs were framed within a recognition of the waning importance of social studies knowledge and the increased instrumentalization of content for the purposes of skills development.

The Human Experience

In this final section on the purpose of social studies education, I explore responses from teachers that described the purpose of social studies as engaging students with what I call "The Human Experience". These responses entailed a belief that the purpose of social studies education was for students to learn what it means to be human, how to interact with others, and how to challenge established social constructs to re envision and act upon social inequity. Table 4.6 below shows the distribution of pre- and in-service teachers among the coded categories that emerged within the theme of "The Human Experience."

Table 4.6.

Teachers' Perceptions of Purpose as Engagement With the Human Experience

Category	Definition	Frequency	Unique Teachers
Challenging Narratives	The purpose of social studies education is to challenge existing critical narratives such as power, race, and gender	Total: 36 Pre-Service: 22 In-Service:14	16
Multiple Perspectives	Social studies provides students with the ability to address multiple and diverse perspectives. This includes a variation of texts and materials, as well as diverse points of view. Different to skills, the aim here was for students to connect with other human beings through multiple perspectives or understand divergent worldviews	Total: 26 Pre-Service:16 In-Service:10	13
Formation and Philosophy	Where the purpose of social studies is for students to develop an understanding of what it means *for them* to be a part of the human race	Total: 9 Pre-Service: 7 In-Service: 2	2
Shared Human Experience	Teachers that believed the purpose of social studies was fundamentally concerned with connecting humans with one another	Total: 9 Pre-Service: 0 In-Service: 9	5

The theme of the human experience that emerged from the data is a term I use to collate teachers' perceptions of the purpose of social studies education that were concerned with the development of students' interaction with society. While the "Application" and "Sake of the Discipline" sections included themes of connection, growth, and skills to be implemented within society, there was a notable difference between those and responses from teachers that

highlighted a more philosophical approach to human (co)existence. Whereas the previous two categories focused on the "study" of social studies for application or inherent meaning, responses within this theme emphasized the "social" aspects of social studies. As Table 4.6 shows, codes within this theme were conceptual in their aims, involving discovery of social and individual personhood and the deconstruction of existing social norms.

Interestingly, there was a slight difference between the distribution of pre- and in-service teachers in this theme. Although the difference between the groups was slight, it appeared that pre-service teachers were slightly more concerned with challenging established social norms and structures than in-service teachers. On the other hand, no pre-service teachers alluded to the importance of a shared human experience. In the following section I explore each of the categories listed above briefly, focusing on how teachers understood the importance of social studies in relating students to the human experience. I also pay close attention to the differences between pre- and in-service teachers, particularly in the final category.

Challenging Narratives. This category emerged as the most common response from teachers concerned about engaging students with the human experience. Teachers in this category saw it as the purpose of social studies education to redress social constructs, historical narratives, and beliefs that perpetuate inequality. Several teachers were eager to address fundamental assumptions that society is fair and offers equal opportunities for all students, empowering students to take action and affect change. Gerri's belief highlights this clearly, she stated,

> To assume we're working on a foundation that's already equal, to me, is a misstep and I think it's really important to stress to students that, you know, we're training you to enter

> the world that we live in, not necessarily the world that we hoped we'd have for you at this point. (Gerri, para. 52)

Gerri's experience as a teacher of color in predominantly White educational environments was echoed by teachers who taught in privileged schools. These teachers felt it was their duty and responsibility to provide students with multiple perspectives (see the following category) to demonstrate underlying social inequity. Connor saw the traditional progression of social studies education through K-12 education as "backwards." He believed that schools are eager to provide students with facts, figures, stories and content at younger ages, saving critical deconstruction for when they are deemed age-appropriate. Connor disagreed, arguing that "those should almost be reversed" and that providing students with the tools to deconstruct narratives should not be sidelined for AP history study but instead built into the fabric of early-years social studies education to provide students with critical thinking skills and a desire to grow up believing in the power of change (para. 76-77). Teachers such as Gerri and Connor felt that exposing students to critical narratives should be incorporated into the curriculum at an early age to catalyze positive change, making it an integral part of child development as opposed to a practice into which one must graduate.

Historical revisionism was seen by many teachers as the most effective way of promoting the deconstruction of narratives, breaking down barriers between people, and engaging students with the wider human experience. The role of the teacher in realizing the purpose of social studies education, argued Siobhan, is

> To give some context. You look at some things and they keep repeating themselves. You see themes like oppressed people, powerful people and you see how those narratives can

> continue over time and pointing that kind of thing out helps people, in my theory, helps people see there are ways to change those systems. (Siobhan, para. 14)

Siobhan believed that the most effective method for social studies education to empower students to change the world, was to engage with content in a critical way. Indeed, the majority of teachers concerned with the human experience believed that presenting counter narratives, multiple perspectives, and challenging the established order was most effective when incorporated within a *re*vision of social studies content.

Kendall described how he believed the education system is designed "largely like a sorting mechanism…for furthering oppression." He stated that,

> It's [education] a tool for…obscuring histories of people's resistance and, you know, continuing…national myths about American exceptionalism and racism and classes. So I think, yeah, for keeping people docile, you know, like, the banking model of education…and that serves, you know, the purpose of pacifying people…so much of social studies education in this country is just perpetuating white supremacy and furthering capitalism and all these things…I see this particularly in history and it frustrates me. (Kendall, para. 21-25)

Instead, Kendall believed that through historical revisionism, challenging narratives of power and oppression, and empowering students to take action, they could help realize a future of productive, equal, coexistence. For these teachers, the human experience involved exposing students to the realities of the world and encouraging them to seek change.

Multiple Perspectives. Linked to teachers' beliefs about the importance of challenging narratives to engage students with the human experience was their need to present students with multiple perspectives. In this way, teachers believed that students would connect with others,

particularly those from whom they were different. For these teachers, social studies education had the potential to bridge contemporary social divides in American society. Reflecting on his own educational experiences, Logan wanted his students to "get what I didn't get." He believed social studies could help students connect with diverse groups of people "and really recognize something it took me years to figure out. How can I connect with these groups? How can I do that in middle school instead of 15 years down the road?" (Logan, para. 78) Logan's motivation was to ensure his students were connected to other members of society so they understood the full human experience, and to address this issue as a matter of urgency before it was too late.

Teaching social studies with multiple perspectives was considered by teachers in this category as an essential means for understanding the full spectrum of human experience and thereby connecting students to others. As Richard stated, "as a social studies teacher, it's also my job to make sure that there is some perspective-taking from my students and not just this monolithic, 'we are one country, this is how we should all behave' kind of narrative." Teachers were adamant that contemporary social dialogue was suffering from a lack of diverse thought and an ability to empathize. As a result, they perceived the purpose of social studies education (at least in part) to help students engage with multiple perspectives in a safe and open environment in which students felt able to voice their opinions and listen to others. In his classroom, Marty worked hard to create "an environment where someone can express themselves about maybe a debatable topic but there isn't a stigma…or certain people don't feel 'my perspective isn't important'. That's even more important now" (Marty, para. 30).

Formation and Philosophy. Two teachers believed one of the purposes of social studies is to encourage students to ask fundamental questions about what it means to be human. Indeed, both MJ and Greg believed social studies education was the natural home for values and

character development. “The more important part” of social studies education, argued MJ, “is getting them thinking about right and wrong” and to have empathy and understanding for others (para. 31). Coming from a philosophy background, Greg was adamant that social studies has suffered waning interest at the hands of increased attention to STEM education. He stated,

> We've been focusing on STEM too much, or STEM…devoid of any ethics or… these deeper questions. I mean, Sputnik went up during the Cold War and we've been freaking out about it ever since, even though it was just a hunk of metal floating in the air, but of course, when you don't study history, you don't know that. So, we've been focusing too much on that and in so doing we have hollowed out the moral foundation of our society, because we've just focused on science and math. (Greg, para. 58)

Greg’s belief that school reform has placed an increasing emphasis on STEM education to the detriment of social studies education was echoed in the literature review. He and MJ believed that a return to ethics, student formation, and morality could be promoted by social studies education.

Shared Human Experience. While the categories above approach elements of the human experience as perceived by teachers, this category emerged as teachers specifically called for social studies to promote a sense of global, human community. Interestingly, all teachers that made such calls were in-service teachers with a significant amount of teaching experience. These teachers displayed wisdom of the shared historical human experience. Ted, a veteran teacher with 21 years of experience, described social studies as the access point between individual students and a shared human experience:

> To me, social studies education…teaches not only how to engage in your community and what your role is in that community and how you can make positive change in that

> community. But…it really helps, I think, establish our shared humanity. It's our shared humanity in our global community and our national community and our local community. For social studies teachers in particular…I feel like we are sitting at the intersection where we're sitting in the present and we're looking at the past to say, how do we get here? You know what, because social studies in the end, it's just about, it's our story, right? (Ted, para. 34-36)

Ted believed social studies was not merely a way of retelling the past or even redressing historical narratives, but sits at the "intersection" of past and present, tying together human experience into one "story."

Summary: The Purposes of Social Studies Education

Teachers perceived a number of interconnected purposes of social studies education. Each of these purposes was framed within a debate presented by teachers themselves between skills and content. Interestingly, teachers were eager to assume that the general perception of social studies was dry, boring and an exercise in the memorization of facts. As a result, all teachers, even those most passionate about content material, foregrounded the importance of skills over content. Furthermore, teachers believed that the purpose of content in social studies was, for modern social studies education, primarily as a means of accessing deeper underlying purposes such as skills acquisition for the purpose of democratic engagement. Within the three broad themes of "The Sake of the Discipline," "Application," and "The Human Experience" teachers prioritized certain purposes over others based on their ideological beliefs and complex ongoing contemporary socio-political tensions.

Although no single purpose for social studies dominated for these teachers, on the whole teachers valued skills acquisition for application and civic participation to challenge and question

established ideas about the world. Overall, pre- and in-services teachers largely shared the same beliefs about the purposes of social studies education. The following section explores two slight differences with regards to idealism and a shared human experience.

Section Three: Pre-Service and In-Service Teachers

There existed few distinct differences in how pre- and in-service teachers perceived the purpose of social studies education. The majority of themes, categories, and subcategories featured a relatively equal distribution of pre- and in-service teachers. However, there existed one area where pre- and in-service teachers displayed a modicum of differentiation; where pre-service teachers were idealistic in-service teachers tended to be more realistic in their outlook.

It emerged from the data that pre-service and in-service teachers held somewhat divergent views on the outcomes of student education, with pre-service teachers suggesting a more open-ended approach than in-service teachers who tended to frame student futures within employment and civic structures. Indeed, pre-service teachers were somewhat more idealistic for their students' futures. Tom, a pre-service teacher at a large private university, associated himself with "holistic education and making sure students receive supports in ways beyond just the content area and skills," for him this meant encouraging students to think of their social studies education as "formational" rather than practical (Tom, para. 76). While Tom recognized the importance of creating "competent professionals" his concerns for the purposes of social studies transcended this and he saw, instead, the importance of allowing individuals to be totally free in their choices.

Greg agreed, arguing that "work is not meaningful in itself, so to speak…if we're only going to train people for their jobs, we're not training them for deep lives of meaning" (Greg,

para. 14). Instead, Greg envisioned for his students "training for life…and care for the whole person." While in-service teachers did not necessarily disagree (and some actively agreed that students should develop a deeper sense of purpose) they were, on the whole, more grounded in their approach to the purposes of social studies education. They encouraged their students to explore topics within more clearly defined boundaries such as employment or civic participation. Indeed, future employment and helping students to meet their survival needs appeared as the most common ground for teachers' realism.

Although Leon expressed a belief that social studies education provides students with the opportunity to learn useful skills to follow their individual education path and a desire to "create the next generation of liberal artists, historians, or people who frankly are not STEM [he chuckles]," this was grounded in a recognition that the reality of his classrooms was to prepare students "more [for]...survival in society." Leon's acknowledgement that students required skills to survive was echoed by other in-service teachers who believed that the outcomes of social studies education, particularly in reference to the development of "skills," were for application in future employment.

Again, there were instances (Logan and Sandy, for example) where pre-service teachers emphasized the importance of skills development for their students' prospective employment, but on the whole, it was in-service teachers who connected social studies with future employment. This was most obvious amongst the 15 teachers that spoke about the importance of critical thinking skills (the largest of all subcategories). Of these 15 teachers, eight were pre-service teachers, all of whom noted the potential for critical thinking skills to help students engage with society, contemporary issues, and develop as independent thinkers. Four of the

seven in-service teachers, however, referred to the importance of critical thinking skills in securing or benefitting future employment.

Jeff, in particular, spoke to the potential of critical thinking as skills for future employment:

> Once you get to be an adult, whatever your job is, you're not going to do a lot of persuasive history essays but you might have a job where your boss comes to you and says, 'we need to write a report in which our department is asking for more money'. Well, that report is an essay; persuade people to give you something or to see your side of it. (Jeff , para. 21-22)

Jeff and other in-service teachers adopted a realistic approach to their students' skills development in the sense that skills, among other purposes of social studies education, were more grounded in concrete outcomes such as employment or voting. Pre-service teachers, conversely, were more ready to look beyond these concrete or realistic outcomes and present a more idealized view for their students.

Siobhan recognized the importance of preparing students for future employment yet emphasized a more idealistic purpose that transcended a narrow focus. She stated,

> I think a lot of teachers…say, 'you're prepping to go to something bigger you're prepping to go to something bigger you're prepping to go to something bigger', so you have all of these kids who graduate from a 4 year university and they're like, oh wait what's bigger now, 'oh I have a job' but…is that better? and they're like (grunts dejectedly) so they're conditioned to thinking that there's always something bigger and better and that's not always what the case is. (Siobhan, para. 62)

Siobhan suggested a view similar to that of Greg whereby employment, while perhaps realistic, is not inherently meaningful and, as such, her role as the teacher was to provide her students with a grander sense of meaning and purpose; a far more idealistic viewpoint.

Overall, in-service and pre-service teachers held relatively consistent viewpoints across all areas of purpose, both in terms of education writ large and within social studies. With that in mind, however, there were some slight but notable differences between their conceptualizations of student outcomes. While in-service teachers were supportive of student independence in forging their own paths through life, they tended, on the whole, to adopt a more realistic approach when compared to pre-service teachers who were, sometimes, more idealistic.

Summary

Teachers perceived multiple purposes of social studies education. These purposes were integral to realizing an overarching purpose of education, considered to be a culmination of growth, compliance, and challenging established systems. The purposes of social studies education as perceived by teachers, took place within an overarching debate between skills and content. Despite the widely held belief in the existence of this debate however, teachers all seemed to fall (to a greater or lesser degree) on one side of the debate. Teachers believed content, while often personally interesting and a major factor in deciding their dedication to the profession, was most useful as a means to accessing relevant skills. From here, teachers argued for the various applications of skills, either in terms of future employment, civic participation, challenging oppressive or established social structures, or to be determined by students themselves. Those teachers for whom the discipline of social studies itself represented a significant purpose, acknowledged the waning interest in social studies from a socio-political standpoint and, as a result, emphasized the cultural significance of social studies content or its

ability to catalyze student thinking. Furthermore, other teachers believed the purpose of social studies transcended a narrow acquisition of material for discrete application and instead suggested the purpose of social studies was to engage students in the shared human experience. This entailed challenging social constructs as well as discovering what it means to be human. There existed little difference between pre- and in-service teachers' perceptions on the purpose of social studies. At times, pre-service teachers seemed more idealistic than in-service teachers, who framed student growth and individualism within a reality of social survival, particularly employment and civic participation.

In response to the initial research question, it was clear throughout the interviews and constant comparative data analysis that both pre- and in-service teachers perceived multiple purposes of social studies education. How teachers prioritized the purposes of education varied based on their individual contexts and ideologies. In the following chapter I explore these ideas of context and ideology more deeply by looking at how teachers made sense of purpose given various internal and external pressures.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

In this chapter, I explore how the data addressed the second research question, "How do teachers make sense of complex internal and external pressures and relate to the purposes of social studies education?" While answering questions on the purposes of social studies education, teachers stated that they were navigating a number of internal and external pressures in order to realize these purposes. As broad as these responses were, I found three dominant areas that affected teachers' perceptions of purpose. In this chapter I explore the effects of state frameworks, the role of the teacher, and socio-cultural events, on teachers' perceptions of the purposes of social studies education.

Table 5.1.

Internal and External Pressures for Social Studies Teachers

Theme	Definition	Categories
Section One: State Frameworks	The largest theme. Explores how teachers made sense of state frameworks, policy changes, and Massachusetts specific policy	Professional Judgment and Policy Responses (including Resistance, Partial Compliance, Compliance); Massachusetts Policy (including Media Literacy, Global Citizenship, Diverse Perspectives)
Section Two: The Role of the Teacher	Teachers' perceptions on the role of the social studies teachers as a means of realizing the purpose of social studies education	Changing and Rethinking Pedagogy; Technology
Section Three: Socio-Cultural Pressures	Ongoing socio-cultural pressures that affect teachers' interpretation and manifestation of the purposes of social studies	Current Events; COVID; Social-Emotional Crisis; Stakeholders; Community

Table 5.1 shows the three sections, definitions, and categories in Chapter Five. Throughout each of these themes I analyze the internal and external pressures at play and how these shaped teachers' conceptualization and enactment of the purposes of social studies education. I begin by looking at how teachers made sense of policy, including how teachers managed policy-level pressures alongside their own professional judgment. I pay close attention to the levels of resistance or compliance teachers employed with regards to the implementation of policy. Overall teachers seemed conflicted in their implementation of policy, offering contradictory views (sometimes even self-contradictory) whereby they enjoyed the autonomy provided by the state of Massachusetts and agreed with standards that resonated with their beliefs but also admonished standards that didn't align with their ideologies or restricted their practice. Teachers that exhibited a resistance to policy in practice were overwhelmingly veteran in-service teachers with several years of teaching experience. After presenting practical and ideological resistance and agreements I explore teachers' sensemaking of Massachusetts-specific policy, including recent policy changes surrounding media literacy, diverse perspectives, and global citizenship.

In section two I present teachers' perceptions of the role of the teacher as a reflection of changing pedagogy in response to social, educational, and (most prominently) technological change. Here, teachers alluded to a changing ontology of teaching. They argued that the very notion of what it means to be a teacher was changing in relation to ongoing technological and social changes, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers were eager to embrace these evolving professional ontologies, suggesting that adaptation itself is part of teaching.

Finally, in section three, I conclude with an analysis of how teachers made sense of socio-cultural issues. Here I found that teachers' personal ideologies shone through and, in order

to appease their educational contexts, teachers created a specific kind of teacher identity to navigate their practice. I present an appreciation and critique of this teacher identity in relation to current events, the COVID-19 pandemic, and social-emotional crises.

Section One: State Frameworks

Policy such as state frameworks presented teachers with a number of pressures to which they responded. Teachers operated as gatekeepers, helping implement and realize state frameworks to enable student learning. In making sense of policy teachers balanced their own ideological perspectives and beliefs on purpose alongside policy aims, resulting in varying levels of resistance and agreement in practice. Just as policy shapes teaching, teachers themselves hold a significant amount of power when it comes to realizing the aims of policy (Coburn, 2001; Cohen & Ball, 1990; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). As Coburn (2001) noted, teachers' sensemaking of policy is influenced by their pre-existing beliefs and results in an enactment, adaptation, or deflection of policy in their daily instruction and interactions with students. The Massachusetts standards are not prescriptive in terms of implementation, assessment or pedagogy. Instead they provide overarching content and skills aimed for teachers to deploy in their classrooms.

In this section I explore the professional judgments teachers made in response to state policy. I begin by giving an overview of professional judgment and relating this to the extent to which teachers complied with state policy in both practice and principle. Following this, I look at teachers' responses to Massachusetts' policy changes, particularly the 2018 revisions that emphasized global citizenship, diverse perspectives, and media literacy standards.

Professional Judgment

Teachers' professional judgment describes the capacity of teachers to make informed decisions about their practice. It includes making sense of policy, lesson design, and classroom-level decisions (Coulter et al., 2007; Dottin, 2009). Shalem (2014) suggested that teachers' professional judgment extends to incidents such as the decision to focus on instances that "are worthy of her attention for *that* educational situation" (p. 3). This emphasis on the local and contextual correlates with what Luntley (2009) described as "committing cognitive resources to working along a certain line of considerations" that prevail in a certain school or classroom (p. 288). Teachers' professional judgment was evident in relation to their policy sensemaking and in justifying their decisions to resist or comply with educational policies. Teachers' likelihood to resist or comply with educational policy was related to their experience level and their individual beliefs about purpose. The extent of resistance or compliance was reminiscent of Dover et al's., (2016) categories of teachers' decisions to "reframe," "embrace" or "resist" policy.

Responses from teachers highlighted confusion and contradictions over the implementation of educational policies, based on their divergent beliefs on the purposes of social studies and their levels of experience. Teachers that actively resisted policy in their practice were almost all in-service teachers with a significant amount of teaching experience. This may be due to the relative freedoms provided by the state of Massachusetts alongside sentiments of teacher alienation and institutionalization that come with experience. Both pre-service and in-service teachers questioned the realism of many policies, with pre-service teachers more likely to determine that educational policies failed to address students' needs, particularly for their minority students.

Of those teachers who adhered to or complied with policy, pre-service teachers tended to benefit from the structure and direction of standards which gave them a sense of security. By comparison, both pre-service and in-service teachers expressed their support for the mission statement provided by the state.

In the following three categories I explore the views of those teachers that disagreed with and resisted policy, complied with policy to an extent, and those that complied entirely. Each of these categories involves theoretical and practical ramifications for instruction following sensemaking. As with the previous chapter it is important to note that teachers did not necessarily fall neatly into one category (ie. total resistance or total compliance) but voiced their opinions across categories.

Disagreement and Resistance. Teachers that resisted standards in a practical sense acknowledged the aspects of the standards they disagreed with before sharing areas in which they practiced this resistance. Disagreement was centered around three major issues. First, teachers felt that policies did not reflect the practical realities of teaching. Second, teachers decried a lack of creativity and feelings of restriction. Third, teachers experienced a disillusionment with democratic institutions.

Practical Realities. Teachers highlighted a disconnect between the views and goals of policymakers and the realities of being a classroom teacher, feeling that their own beliefs about the purposes of education, the state message on the purposes of social studies, and their students' context were divergent. Of the seven teachers that spoke of this disconnect, one was a pre-service teacher whereas six were in-service teachers. For these teachers, policymakers were out of touch with the realities and demands of classroom practice. According to these teachers, the purposes of social studies education were inherently tied to context and were overlooked in the creation of

overarching educational policies. Each teacher was asked to respond to the Massachusetts statement of the purpose of social studies (see Appendix B, question 6). The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) stated that the purpose of social studies is "to prepare students to have the knowledge and skills to become thoughtful and active participants in a democratic society and a complex world" (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, p. 12) **.**

Sandy, a pre-service 7th grade history teacher in western Massachusetts, responded with what he believed "might not be a popular answer to education professors." He argued that "at the end of the day, the relationship building and how you can structure the lessons to our students so they feel safe in a classroom, in my mind, will always take precedence over what some guys sitting in a desk who wants to craft education policy thinks" (Sandy, para. 50). Sandy perceived education policymakers as far removed from his educational settings. His views were unique among pre-service teachers.

Ted, an in-service teacher with 21 years of experience across private and public, middle and high school settings, spoke candidly of his beliefs about policy. Having attended a prestigious school in the Boston area for his Master's degree, Ted reflected on his previous desire to become a policymaker:

> I was thinking, maybe I want to be like a policymaker. Maybe I want to go work for the DOE and I became pretty disillusioned pretty quickly. I was in the administration planning and social policy major…and a lot of my professors who had worked at the DOE had been policymakers and had never taught in a secondary class. I was like, what the hell are you even talking about? You guys are making policy and the only way this policy happens is if a classroom teacher can implement it and you have zero idea what is

> implementable in a room full of 30 adolescents who are all over the place. (Ted, para. 65-66)

Ted expressed a view shared among the other five in-service teachers who emphasized a disconnect in purpose and goals between policymakers and teachers; he believed that policies are designed by qualified academics who lack a grounding in the practical realities of the classroom. For Ted policymakers had "zero idea" on the realities of the classroom.

This perspective was echoed by Richard who perceived different levels of (mis)representation across the state. Richard argued that colleagues at different schools felt isolated by, on the one hand a "huge workload," and on the other a lack of support from policy and administrators. As a result, Richard said, he and his colleagues felt like "just a teacher in a school building" rather than a valued and supported teacher. All three teachers mentioned a disconnect between the state purposes and the individualized realities of their classroom practice.

What emerged from the data was a sense of alienation in which teachers recognized the demise of creative artistry in their teaching, the denial of the complexity of their everyday settings, the instrumentalization of education through the mass-conformity of educational policy. Teachers felt alienated from their personal meaning and purposes for education as cogs in the educational machine, victims of educational consumerism and monolithic policy. Shirley and Macdonald (2016) defined alienation as "that kind of teaching that teachers perform when they feel that they *must* comply with external conditions that they have not chosen and from which they inwardly dissent because the reforms do not serve their children well" (p. 3). In this study some teachers not only responded to alienation through compliance and inward dissent, but also in active resistance.

A Lack of Creativity and Restricted Practice. Similar to teachers who highlighted a disconnect between policy and practice, teachers also expanded on alienation by highlighting a decline in their lack of room for creativity in their practice, feeling restricted by policy where its aims were divergent from their own perspectives on the purposes of education. Seven teachers (two pre-service and five, in-service) believed that the standards restricted their practice and student learning. They felt that the more important learning experiences took place beyond policy.

Hiram, for example, described valuable learning opportunities as rooted within real-world experiences. However, he argued,

> In reality…you can't do that very easily in high school right now. You certainly can't do that…with the content, not with the standards, not in the traditional environment in which we exist…they're too restrictive. If you're going to take kids out of school for three or four hours a night for an extra curricular project, then what's the biology teacher going to say, what's the algebra two teacher going to say? Everybody's trying to jam their standards in. (Hiram para. 41)

Hiram resented the restrictions imposed by standards across disciplines which force teachers to operate rigidly within their boundaries. For Hiram, the learning he considered to be most desirable (experiential learning) was impossible given the restrictions imposed on him by the standards.

Willa, one of the two pre-service teachers in this category, argued that the content of standards is equally restrictive. "If I were creating my own high school education curriculum" she argued, "they would not involve two years of American history" (Willa, para. 61). Yet as a pre-service teacher she felt obliged to follow the standards religiously. As an extension of

standards, standardized testing was perceived as further limiting teacher creativity. While Massachusetts does not have a standardized test for social studies the idea of standardized testing was met with heavy criticism from teachers. “I hate state testing,” argued Loretta, “because I find it limiting. It loses the ability for teachers to be creative and focus on the individual students” (Loretta, para. 28). As Loretta explained, teachers that believed state legislation restricted practice felt that standardized testing limited their creativity.

Reactive Not Proactive: Disillusionment With Democratic Institutions. A number of teachers challenged the very basis of state frameworks, notably their reactionary approach to the improvement of student learning, and their foundations in a broken democratic system. Jeff was particularly outspoken about Massachusetts’ statement on the purpose of social studies education. In response to the state’s definition he stated,

> I know a couple of people who wrote the frameworks; good people. I think that phrase is bullshit. It's a bullshit phrase. It's what is hot and heavy now…It's reactive rather than being proactive. I think the frameworks as a whole suffer from that. History is a Lego castle. You go to the store, buy your Lego. You look at the box and you know that if you follow the directions that you're going to have this great result but you could also open that box and put all of the pieces right on top of each other. You're still going to get a wall, a big tower. That's still a structure, but you haven't put it together correctly. It's just random pieces put together to produce something. And I think that's what this particular framework does. I think it does that because it's still reacting... So they took these new frameworks, they said the new hip phrases, ‘democracy’, and ‘civics’, we'll slap that on it and we'll sort of make what schools have currently going on to sort of fit that with a couple of changes here or there. (Jeff, para. 46-52)

In the above excerpt Jeff made several points echoed by other teachers that disagreed with state frameworks. Jeff's description of the standards as "bullshit" and "hot and heavy now" underscored his beliefs elsewhere that policy and standards exist in conversation with the zeitgeist and that, in reality, these aims are transitory. Jeff believed standards can be a way of legitimizing current practice and social thought. In contrast, he operated according to his own personal beliefs and the contexts in which he taught. As a result, Jeff branded the standards as "reactive rather than proactive."

This conceptualization of standards was echoed elsewhere by teachers who believed the design of standards came in reaction to social change. While this was not perceived necessarily as a bad thing, Jeff was disillusioned by the ever-changing and confusing nature of standards and, instead, rooted his practice in his own professional judgment and ideological convictions. Others that held the same view believed standards should be more proactive or provide more space for teachers' creative capacities to pursue their own purposes.

Hiram argued that standards reform simply cannot maintain pace with ongoing social and technological change. Despite "constantly talking about media and academic sources…and everything that kids have to vet on the web," he admitted that "I don't know that we are keeping up. I see what my kids are doing…and, you know, trying but I don't know that we're keeping up" (Hiram, para. 51-52). Hiram described an uphill battle for policy in a constantly changing environment. Instead, argued Roman, teachers should be given the freedom and creativity to react in ways they see fit, or policymakers should create the space for proactive change. Here again, we see the dialectical tension outlined by Young (2008) between the top-down aims of neoconservative standardized policy, and the bottom-up situational, experiential knowledge of

postmodern criticism. Teachers were asked to make sense of, what seemed to them, to be diametrically opposed duties.

While arguably policy can never be completely prescriptive and must always retain space for reaction, some teachers, particularly pre-service teachers, questioned the fundamental assumptions of standards themselves. When presented with the Massachusetts statement of purpose a number of teachers questioned the reality of a truly democratic society. “The assumption” argued Gerri, “is that we are in a democratic society already” (Gerri, para. 50). She continued, speaking to her own experiences as a person of color, arguing that “I live in a place in a country where everyone doesn’t have the right to vote in a country where people are constantly denied opportunities based on their race and their gender. I don’t see how we call that a democracy” (para. 50-51).

Gerri was not alone in questioning this fundamental assumption. Other pre-service teachers such as Kendall argued that the Massachusetts definition of the purpose of social studies education “presupposes that we have a democratic society that all students can participate in” (Kendall, para. 43). Kendall suggested that the Massachusetts statement of purpose presumes that if students possess certain amounts of knowledge about democratic institutions they have equal access to democratic practices. He described this as “completely bogus,” offering a more genuine purpose of social studies education, which he conceptualized as challenging democratic institutions.

Greg, another pre-service teacher, admitted that “there’s value” in the Massachusetts statement of purpose. However, he declared himself “skeptical,” asking, “why would you assume that we live in a democratic society…it’s a dumpster fire. Everyone’s just trying to score political points on each other by taking jabs instead of asking deep questions” (para. 30-33). Teachers like

Greg, Kendall, and Gerri agreed with the purpose of social studies outlined by Massachusetts but disagreed with its reality, suggesting instead that such views of purpose are inherently exclusionary and idealistic.

Resistance in Practice. As a result of these three key areas in which teachers disagreed with state standards (the practical realities, a lack of creativity, and a disillusionment with policymakers and the concept of democracy) teachers expressed moments of active resistance, particularly in-service teachers. Typically, these moments of resistance involved ignoring or paying little attention to state frameworks, or operating independently and applying state frameworks after-the-fact. These moments came as a direct result of feelings of alienation and divergent perspectives on the purposes of social studies education whether theoretically or in practice. Instances of resistance were framed within teachers' convictions in their own professional judgment and in communication with supportive mentors.

Teachers that admitted ignoring or paying little attention to state frameworks foregrounded their own beliefs in what students needed to learn. Ted, who spent a long period of his 21 years in teaching at a private school stated that he was "not someone that reads the standards and makes sure that I am following the standards. I sometimes have but I'm not always sure who's writing these standards" (Ted, para. 63) .

While Ted acknowledged he understood the "general" idea of what the standards were asking of him, he again highlighted a disconnect between policymakers and teachers facing everyday classroom realities:

> I am concerned sometimes with public education and the bureaucratic crap that goes on with public education, that the people making policy have zero idea what teaching

> secondary school is like, what adolescents are like. Even the structure that's a sort of factory model structure of a school day can impact a 15-year old kid. (Ted, para. 68-69)

As such, Ted went about his teaching irrespective of the standards, focusing instead on "the world around me…the kids in front of me" (Ted, para. 73). He taught them what he believed they needed to know. Sometimes this overlapped with standards, other times it did not.

Ted's resistance to state standards and the curation of his own contextually relevant curriculum was not uncommon. Richard said his own "hybrid US history mode…ironically turned out to be very similar to what the fifth grade curriculum is now," and Loretta highlighted her somewhat controversial curriculum which diverged from the state frameworks. In both of these instances teachers' willingness to resist state legislation was supported by their supervisors. Loretta felt protected by her "fantastic department head who is very much for us having these kinds of conversations" and was "supported by…our school board after two years of convincing them" (Loretta, para. 70).

Short of a full diversion from state frameworks, teachers also spoke candidly about designing and implementing their own curriculum before retroactively applying standards that applied if they required justification or came under scrutiny. Reflecting on his graduate school education program, MJ shared that in lesson plans "we would have to put the frameworks" but in reality "oftentimes…we just squeeze it in" to fit pre-existing ideas and goals (para. 58). For MJ and other resistant teachers, state frameworks that were intended to guide practice were used after-the-fact to legitimize personal decisions. As Connor observed, "there's a group of teachers that…have lessons in mind and then find one or two or three standards that apply and put those in because it does cover all the standards but they use that as a basis to do their own thing" (Connor, para. 54). Conversely, teachers like Leon, an in-service teacher with 15 years of

experience in a wealthy public school district, the standards provided a basic concept which he and other teachers adapted and "rebranded" to look how he wanted it to look. Leon took the topic of "ancient civilizations" and "rebranded" it away from the standards which he believed contained outdated and confusing material, towards "the rise and fall of empires."

Summary. A number of teachers, predominantly in-service teachers, resisted state frameworks to varying degrees. This resistance involved either a complete rejection of state frameworks in favor of their own priorities and contexts, or a retroactive surface-level alignment with state legislation. It is worth noting that oftentimes teachers would teach broadly similar content areas to state standards, resisting more specific content rather than overarching topics. This showed that teachers were not entirely opposed to state standards themselves. Instead they exercised professional judgment when considering what was relevant for their students and aligned with their personal beliefs on the purposes of social studies.

Overall, teachers that resisted state frameworks did so because they fundamentally disagreed with their aims either in classroom contexts or in and of themselves, and felt alienated as professionals in relation to state legislation. That being said, these teachers were still in the minority, constituting seven of the 21 teachers that were interviewed. The vast majority of teachers perceived the positives and negatives of state frameworks and chose selective moments of resistance alongside selective compliance.

Selective Resistance: Flexible Policy Interpretation. A large number of teachers aligned with state frameworks but also exhibited moments of resistance. These teachers agreed that standards were not perfect yet provided some form of useful support to help guide their teaching and learning. As Jeff put it, "the frameworks are just that - they're a frame. Once you get past that, build your damn house, however you want" (para, 58). For these teachers, standards

offered a broad structure that consequently allowed teachers to explore their own priorities and purposes.

Roman, for example, noted that "different school systems have their ways and ideas [about standards] and you just have to adapt to them and make it your own as much as you can" (Roman, para. 39). Roman described the process of making sense of policy as a balancing act between addressing overarching state concerns and including teachers' individual priorities. He suggested that teachers needed to fit within a larger system of shared professional commitments before exploring their own beliefs.

Marty described this process for teachers and students, as "staying within their lane." He argued that policy should not be considered a free-for-all but should provide teachers and students with an overarching framework with "plenty of room to work within their means" (Marty, para. 18). Of these teachers, several highlighted the importance of flexible policy interpretation in different contexts. Roman suggested that "what I learned in a small town in Connecticut is not relevant to what's going on up here in Northsville (pseudonym) Massachusetts, or Boston." Flexible curricula, argued teachers like Roman, Marty, and Sandy, provided teachers with a "guide" rather than ironclad rules and thus accounted for contextual differences. In practice, this resulted in teachers combing through standards and picking the elements that were relevant to their settings and aligned with their purposes and removing those which they believed were not.

Rava described this approach as an "outline" approach that "gave me something to work off" in which she would "take all the standards for each unit like the Greece unit or the Rome unit, and…work through what made sense to do when" (para. 31). While Rava liked, in some units, to "hit every single" standard, she also "had a lot of stuff that I wanted to do or wanted to

cover more or less than the standards wanted me to" (para. 32). For Rava, context and her personal ideological beliefs dictated how she implemented policies as opposed to the standards (and their stated purposes) directing her practice.

As these excerpts show, Rava, Roman, Marty, and Sandy were selective in their implementation of policy; in some instances they were eager to follow policy to a tee, while in others they resisted, covering more or less than what was written. These moments of divergence occurred when teachers identified more pressing classroom realities, held opposing views on relevant content, or disagreed with the stated purposes for various reasons. Teachers in private schools were far more willing to move away from the standards due to a lack of state oversight. In some instances, teachers described standards as broad enough whereby their own individual choices were still operating under the guidelines of the overarching frameworks. Interestingly, this juxtaposes the views of those teachers that felt the standards were too restrictive.

Compliance. Many pre-service teachers believed policy provided useful direction in terms of content and practice, particularly in content areas they found intimidating or with which they were less familiar. When discussing her teaching of ancient civilizations, Rava described standards as "super helpful because I definitely know less about ancient civ than I do about US history because I took US history every year" (Rava, para. 30). This was a common theme for pre-service teachers, for whom unfamiliar content was one of many concerns.

Tom experienced being a pre-service teacher as "overwhelming at times." He said that standards guided his thinking in relation to content. They "keep me grounded," he said, "because every day I can look back and say 'oh here's what I'm trying to accomplish with everything I'm doing in this class'" (Tom, para. 43). Gerri thought the standards provided "insight" and catalyzed "interests you didn't know you had" for students and teachers (para. 44). Roman even

went so far as to ask for more state guidance in certain topics he felt unfamiliar with, particularly in relation to lesson design and supporting resources (para. 56-58).

While pre-service teachers found the standards useful for their emerging practice, some in-service teachers agreed with the sentiment of standards, particularly the Massachusetts statement on the purpose of social studies education. Some in-service teachers found state frameworks allowed room for professional judgment and creativity. Marty described the statement as "encapsulating a lot of what teachers are looking for…it allows teachers to be creative and inventive" (para. 22). Larry agreed with the "overarching goal," because it "does allow a lot of teacher discretion on what to emphasize and offers a lot of adaptability" (Larry, para. 30).

In contrast to those teachers who believed the standards lacked a grounding in classroom realities, Loretta went so far as to argue that "I love the idea behind that [the Massachusetts statement of purpose] ...it definitely seemed idealistic at first…but with the guidelines I see it…as much more tangible and less abstract than it used to be" (Loretta, para. 21-22). For those in-service teachers that agreed with the Massachusetts statement of purpose and the standards as a whole, their allegiance rested in an ideological similarity with the aims of the standards and a belief the standards provided them enough autonomy. These teachers included pre-service and in-service teachers, who believed that "that pretty much nails what I think" (MJ, para. 49).

Loretta argued that state standards were beneficial as they ensured that students were forced to reckon with diverse perspectives. For Loretta, uniformity across the state created opportunity through conformity as opposed to a narrow-minded approach. She stated that

> I know other districts, especially around me that are teaching civics are teaching the same type of structure, teaching Black history, sexism, and immigration. I don't think that wide

> scale conversation could have been approached or happened without the transition to these standards. They're basically forcing us to all meet together. (Loretta, para. 46)

Loretta thought standards promoted equity and perspective where it may be absent.

Summary

Teachers responded to state frameworks and the purpose of social studies education with varying levels of resistance based on the extent to which teachers agreed with the purposes outlined by the state, their own contexts, and their understanding of content. What transcended these approaches was that all teachers desired freedom and creativity from (or within) the standards. Teachers that resisted the standards felt alienated, that standards were too restrictive, hampered their creativity, or were disconnected from their everyday practices. Teachers that complied or agreed with the standards felt they provided them with enough freedom to operate as professionals. In all of these instances, teachers saw the standards as providing a guideline which was either too overbearing or the right amount of support. The content of the standards, rather than their existence, appeared to be the major point of contention. In general, pre-service teachers agreed with the aims and practical consequences of the standards. In-service teachers were far more divided, some resisting the standards completely, while others expressed varying degrees of agreement and compliance.

Massachusetts-Specific Concerns

This research analyzed the views of 21 teachers in Massachusetts and, as such, a number of their responses to the internal and external pressures affecting their practice and perceptions of purpose related to policy concerns specific to Massachusetts. Within this were considerations in line with the recent 2018 standards reform.

2018 Standards Reform Issues. In Chapter Two I highlighted three major areas of concern addressed by the Massachusetts standards reform; civics, media literacy, and global perspectives. Throughout the interviews teachers were asked to consider the extent to which these were a consistent element within their practice and how this related to their overarching beliefs about the purpose of social studies (see Appendix B, question seven). In general, teachers were supportive of policy changes around civics and diverse perspectives, but felt more needed to be done in terms of media literacy. Teachers were almost all thrilled by the lack of standardized testing, feeling that it allowed them more freedom, creativity, and control in their practice. In the following paragraphs I explore each of these in turn, beginning with the increased focus on civics education, particularly the 8th grade social studies project.

An Increased Emphasis on Civics. From the outset, the Massachusetts History and Social Science Frameworks place "an increased emphasis on civics at all grade levels, including a new grade 8 course on civics" (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, p. 3). The standards were designed with a "renewed mission" in mind, conceptualizing civics education as imperative for the survival of American democracy. They stated, "The future of democracy depends on our students' development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will enable them to embrace democracy's potential, while recognizing its challenges and inherent dilemmas" (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, p. 12). As such, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education made it clear in the standards that civics education should be at the heart of social studies education.

A large number of teachers in this study agreed with this aim. They recognized the importance of civics and the potential of the 8th grade civics project to help realize this aim.

While teachers supported this goal, they emphasized that this was nothing new to their practice. They said that they had, in reality, been creating and implementing civics projects for their students before it became mandated by the state.

Loretta was a staunch advocate for civics education, particularly through the middle and high school curriculum. She stressed that "I can't argue enough of how crucial" the civics curriculum is, impressing that for the 120 students in her civics classes, conversations have "been nothing but wonderful, supportive, and emotional" providing space where students were "growing together, learning together, listening together because they had these experiences in their civics classes" (Loretta, para. 55).

Teachers such as Hiram, MJ, and Gerri agreed, referring to civics as a "huge concern" (Hiram, para. 49) that dealt with "really important issues" (MJ, para. 51). These three teachers saw civics education as an essential component of social studies education, particularly purposeful in relation to current events. They all supported the Massachusetts 8th grade social studies project.

The 8th grade social studies curriculum incorporated a student led civics project in a one-year-long curriculum. The state provides teachers with curriculum resources to support their teaching, including Harvard University's "Democratic Knowledge Project," "History Alive!" "iCivics," and "NYC Civics for All." These programs were created to supplement or become teachers' school curricula and were designed to align with certain aspects of the standards.

The teachers were overwhelmingly supportive of the year-long civics program, particularly the end-of-year project as it aligned with a popular belief that one of the purposes of social studies education should be to encourage active civic participation. Loretta described middle school as "the formative process of learning who you are and where you are in the grand

scheme of the world." She felt that the 8th grade civics project was at the "perfect time" in students' development. Loretta's sentiment was echoed by other teachers such as Rava, who noticed a sense of student "ownership over their classroom" when compared to their 7th grade performance. The freedom and agency offered by a student-led project, argued Rava, encouraged students to take control of their learning; a manifestation of civic responsibility in practice. Student empowerment through the 8th grade civics project was considered by teachers to be an exciting opportunity. It aligned clearly with the beliefs of those teachers for whom active citizenship was a driving purpose of social studies education. Learning-by-doing was received well by teachers, who noted that students were simultaneously learning about democratic institutions and experiencing them, what Connor called "civic competency" in action. Maintaining the active component alongside structural understanding was imperative for teachers like Ted, who confessed that "I'm really happy that there's a new focus on civics [but] I hope it doesn't get lost in the more mundane topics like the three branches of government" (Ted, para. 37).

Throughout the interviews there existed only two points of resistance to the 8th grade curriculum changes. First, several teachers suggested that their practice already incorporated student-led action civics projects like the final project. Ted laughed, stating that "it's funny because we did this project before. Now there is a requirement in the social studies standards…We already had something in play that we can tweak or change depending on what the standards were" (para. 62-62). Larry also mentioned incorporating a previously existing "hybrid [project]...of social justice and civics" into the new standards (Larr, para. 42). While Larry and Ted both supported the implementation of a civics project, state frameworks provided legitimacy to pre-existing practice.

Second, Jeff was somewhat resistant to the project, again highlighting his disillusionment with the purposes of the frameworks which he felt were out of touch with his reality. He believed that the standards were unclear and didn't provide him with concrete examples. As with his previous statements, Jeff saw the civics project as an exercise in box-ticking that he would complete if required but would continue to exercise his professional judgment as a veteran teacher. "You want me to do a civics project?" he asked rhetorically, "I will put together something that you can check off on your little box…but is that a quality project for me? I'm going to put the time in so my kids are getting something out of it" (Jeff, para. 31-32).

Jeff's hesitancy was not unique; Larry and Susie both questioned whether students were ready for student-led projects around conceptual topics. Susie argued that "I think that's [8th grade] a bit early but at the same time, I'd like to see it in 8th grade and then again later" (Susie, para. 46). Similarly, Larry presented a realistic approach, arguing that while the aims and overarching goals of the civics project were sound, "if you ask me on a day-to-day level…do you feel like you're contributing and creative active and thoughtful citizens I might be more likely to say no rather than yes," instead, "it's only when you consider it in the long term" that the civics curriculum could be considered successful (Larry, para. 32).

Overall, however, the 8th grade civics curriculum changes were warmly received by teachers. The data showed that teachers agreed, in principle, with the aims of the curriculum (such as civic competency and active participation). Any resistance occurred when teachers disagreed on the practical implementation of these purposes which were divergent from their own beliefs or their contexts. In particular, teachers were incredibly supportive of the student-led project which they felt gave students agency, empowerment, and action, alongside a fundamental appreciation for the structures of government. For the vast majority of teachers the 8th grade

curriculum provided them an opportunity to realize their purposes of social studies education in creative, practical ways.

Media Literacy. Alongside civics education, the revised history and social science frameworks introduced "new standards for financial literacy and news/media literacy" (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, p. 3). Within the frameworks, the media literacy standards make up "a quarter to a half of a school year" of high school study (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, p. 176). The standards deal with issues of the freedom and veracity of the press, through units focused on topics such as, "Topic 3. The challenges of news/media literacy in contemporary society," "Topic 4. Analyzing the news and other media", and "Topic 5. Gathering and reporting information, using digital media" (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, p. 176). "Guiding Principle 8" of the frameworks states that "an effective history and social science education incorporates the study of current events and news/media literacy" (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, p. 15). As such, media literacy forms a large part of middle school and high school curricula, with the inclusion of a stand-alone high school elective and integration within the 8th grade civics curriculum.

The data showed that media literacy was a consistent concern within teachers' practice but they felt more could be done both from an individual and state-wide standpoint to address issues of media literacy, particularly in the face of misinformation and the digital age. Fifteen pre-service and in-service teachers (seven pre-service, eight in-service) spoke directly to media literacy standards, arguing that it was an important and relevant consideration within their practice. Most commonly, teachers perceived media literacy as the ability to question and verify sources of information, particularly online (mis)information. In what Willa recognized as "an era

of misinformation" she argued that "it's so important to be able to reach your own conclusions and not just accept what's being spoon fed to you" (Willa, para. 26).

Empowering students to think for themselves was the most commonly identified purpose amongst supporters of media literacy. Susie claimed to be "scared for the future" generations of students who "get their news from Twitter and a random person just putting it out there" and, as such, advocated for drastic improvements in what she called "student discernment" (Susie, para. 58). Before even beginning content-oriented social studies, Marty had his students take part in a whole week of "good sourcing" to determine verifiable and reliable sources (Marty, para. 24). These teachers were emblematic of an ongoing theme for all teachers in this study; they believed that helping students discern verifiable information was essential to their ongoing learning beyond the classroom, and in order to take part in social studies education.

Despite this widespread acknowledgement on the importance of media literacy in social studies education, a number of teachers argued that the standards were insufficient in addressing issues of media literacy, either because the approach was somewhat tokenistic, or because the material provided was insufficient and out-of-touch. While the standards do mention some form of media literacy throughout different units (often referring to the importance of "diverse media" in different content units), the bulk of the material related to media literacy is confined to the high school elective program and the 8th grade civics curriculum. Aside from these instances, media literacy only "popped up" for teachers "when we first start researching something" (Larry, para. 48). Larry emphasized the tokenistic use of media literacy in his social studies classes, instead calling for a more rigorous and explicit approach to media literacy throughout the standards. Teachers who held similar beliefs to the state, therefore, were supportive of the existence of standards that addressed their concerns. Overall, this demonstrated that teachers

were more concerned with resisting or debating the content of the standards and their purposes rather than the existence of standards themselves.

Jeff agreed, recognizing the need for media literacy before highlighting a lack of policy-level oversight and, what he considered to be, a lack of cultural sensitivity: “Media literacy? What the hell does that even mean? Is media literacy in Lawrence the same as media literacy in Wellesley? No. No, these kids each have their own device” (Jeff, para. 62). For Jeff, policy-level attempts to address media literacy failed to comprehend the vastness and complexity of media literacy and misinformation. In the limited time he felt he had, Jeff again emphasized his capacity as a culturally aware social realist; for him media literacy meant showing his students how to send emails respectfully rather than bombarding them with “the differences between .gov and .edu.”

Similarly, Kendall, a pre-service teacher in an affluent Boston suburb, stated that in an ideal world he would spend more time thinking with his students about the nature and subjectivity of knowledge, presenting history as narrative rather than fact in relation to media literacy. However, given his time constraints and his need to stick rigidly to state frameworks as a pre-service teacher concerned with meeting his requirements, he claimed that “there was not any room readily available” to have those conversations (Kendall, para. 48)

Teachers were passionate about the inclusion of media literacy throughout the frameworks and saw it as an important purpose for modern social studies education. They believed that during the digital age in which misinformation is rife, equipping students with the ability to discern and make sense of information surrounding them is of paramount importance. That being said, teachers felt the standards fell short of a truly integrated approach, often tacking

media literacy alongside their everyday practice, siloing it into two content areas, or being overtaken by the overwhelming amount of alternative content they had to deliver.

As a result, argued Sandy, "the standards mean well, I think they have good information in them. I think they try to address that [media literacy] but I think you can do that without looking at some boardroom crafted, nice, buzzword sounding paragraph about how to teach. Just do it" (Sandy, para. 74). Sandy's belief summarized the majority of teachers' opinions on media literacy. The standards, he argued, addressed the importance of media literacy but dressed it up insincerely. He wanted teachers to incorporate it "whenever you can" (Sandy, para. 73).

Diverse Perspectives. The final thread of standards revision mentioned by teachers throughout the interviews was the importance of diverse perspectives. The frameworks focused explicitly on the "inclusion of standards that reflect the diversity of the United States and world cultures, with particular attention to the contributions of women and men of all ethnicities and backgrounds in the United States and the connections among world cultures" (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, p. 3). Overall, teachers were extremely supportive of the state's approach to diverse perspectives, agreeing with the importance of representation in theory and practice. This aligned with those teachers who perceived the purpose of social studies as in some way challenging established systems. Indeed, "diverse perspectives," as outlined in the previous chapter, was of primary concern to teachers in the study.

In response to question seven (see Appendix B) Hiram responded, "Oh yeah. That's every day. Yeh. That's every day. You need to have different perspectives" (Hiram, para. 53). In expressing her own beliefs on the importance of foregrounding diverse perspectives in social studies, Loretta remarked on the ubiquity of this viewpoint amongst colleagues. During a

professional development discussion on the standards Loretta noted that “nearly all the educators present were pushing for ideas of teaching about these issues [diverse perspectives].” In Massachusetts, a liberal and relatively diverse state, this was unsurprising. Indeed, teachers were consistent in their perceptions of the importance of diverse perspectives. They believed the state frameworks did an important and necessary job at interacting with their own beliefs and the reality of school contexts.

Summary

Teachers were not opposed to the existence of standards per se, but quarreled over their content, resisting when state frameworks diverged from their own beliefs on the purposes of social studies education, were deemed irrelevant to their contexts, or presented practical difficulties. Moments of resistance also occurred when teachers felt alienated and that the state’s purposes were idealistic in comparison to their social realities. Teachers that resisted state standards tended to be in-service, veteran teachers, whose practice was grounded in their context and personal beliefs about relevant information. For example, a number of in-service teachers adopted a stance that they knew their students better than state policymakers. These teachers leaned on their years of experience to make sense of policy, choosing either to cast it aside in favor of their own approaches, or take from it what they agreed with and leave that which they did not.

Yet even the harshest critics of the standards felt they held value when they aligned with their beliefs on the purposes of social studies education. Calls for increased media literacy standards and the overwhelming support of the 8th grade civics project show this clearly. All teachers, no matter the extent to which they agreed with standards, believed autonomy was essential to their professional practice. Teachers that felt their autonomy was compromised felt

alienated and resisted state changes. Teachers that felt the standards protected a level of autonomy spoke of them more favorably. Teachers that felt the standards gave them a lot of autonomy, stuck more rigidly to the implementation of standards.

Pre-service teachers that agreed with state testing believed they provided useful guidelines, particularly in content areas they found intimidating. For these teachers, professionalism meant a shared culture of inquiry and common teaching resources. The standards provided for these pre-service teachers, a level of security and comfort.

On the whole teachers presented a confusing response to state frameworks that highlighted a complex web of ongoing tensions between personal convictions on the purposes of social studies, official state purposes of social studies education, and the realities of their classroom contexts.

Section Two: The Role of the Teacher

Teachers acknowledged their changing role as social studies teachers when confronted with the purpose of social studies and ongoing social change. In particular, teachers reflected on the changing nature of their pedagogy in relation to technological change and the realities of their teaching environments. Teachers' pedagogies were a reflection of their personal and professional beliefs which, in turn, were manifested through their understanding of the role of the teacher. In this section, I explore how teachers perceived the nature of their roles in realizing the purpose of social studies through their pedagogies and uses of technology.

Changing Pedagogy: Connecting Purpose to Practice

Following discussions on the purpose of social studies education, teachers were asked to reflect on what they believed to be the role of the teacher in realizing that purpose (see Appendix A). The majority of teachers referred to their role as some form of "facilitator," "guide,"

"moderator," or "co-learner." Gerri described the role as "a facilitated leadership role. Instead of guiding people exactly where to go…[it's]...exploring whatever topic and [giving] students that open space to explore" because "it encourages people to think for themselves" (para. 34). Gerri's perception of the role of the teacher clearly aligned with her stated purpose. She believed that the purpose of education was to "explore and learn" and provide "a space where people can better understand how the world works and decide how they want to shape it" (Gerri, para. 25). Gerri's practice highlighted a consistent thread throughout her practice, from her perceptions on the purpose of education, through her beliefs about the role of the teacher, to her practical implementation of these methods, all while balancing the pressures of being a pre-service teacher of color in a predominantly White state.

All teachers had a clear thread running through their responses, connecting their perceptions of the purposes of education, particularly social studies education, and how this related to practice which, in turn, influenced the role of the teacher. Ted reflected on the "constantly changing" nature of practice and his role "based on changes in American society and how the kids reacted to the class the year before." Given his belief that the purpose of social studies education is to "establish our shared humanity" and teaching "kids how to become engaged citizens," Ted believed it was his role to "to figure out how to ask driving questions that incite curiosity and that get them to pull threads from the past and understand why we should care about this [social studies content]" (Ted, para. 42). Ted's response highlighted this clear link between his beliefs on the purpose of social studies (civic participation and the human experience) and the role of the teacher as an instigator for engagement in social issues.

In order to keep in line with changing social pressures and their own evolving beliefs about the purpose of education, Gerri and Ted explained the ways in which their pedagogies

evolved away from teacher-led learning, to student-centered learning. Hiram described this process as a "reduction in terms of the amount of content" and towards a "much more thematic, more project based approach" (Hiram, para. 34). For Logan this meant "student-centered not teacher-centered" which he admitted, "is kind of a challenge right now" because it was not the kind of education he received (Logan, para. 18). Similarly, Tom argued that memorization and "old-school" (Leon, para. 46) teaching methods did not enable "genuine" learning (Tom, para. 32). He described a "balancing act" because "giving students the freedom…there's a chance they might go off in the wrong direction but there's also a great chance of success" (Tom, para. 32).

These teachers' responses demonstrated an acknowledgement of the changing role of the teacher, from content knowledge expert, to facilitator of genuine learning. Teachers' changing pedagogies and their perceptions of the role of the teacher were a manifestation of their beliefs on the purposes of education. While most teachers perceived a withdrawal from the spotlight in their teaching, Jeff embraced this, branding his role as "cheerleader," although he was careful not to resort to "droning" (Jeff, para. 37).

Technology

Technology was considered a major catalyst in accelerating the evolution of pedagogy and the changing role of the teacher. Teachers recognized the pivotal role technology played in redefining the role of the teacher alongside the impact it had on their pedagogy and classroom practice. What resulted was an overarching reconsideration of the ontology of teaching itself.

Leon reflected on his own personal educational journey as a student and a teacher. He stated,

> When I was student teaching in South City (pseudonym) in 2003-2005 it was a chalkboard and it was 20 kids in a room looking at the chalkboard, it was lecture, it was

> content, it was a video, it was maps, it was pretty old school teaching, kind of like the history classes I went through, and then the smart board got introduced to Northville. Now you have this interactive whiteboard and these graphics. The technology revolution happened so I really changed from then. I got older and my stamina decreased (laughter) and my ability to spend every day at school until 6-7 o'clock perfecting a lesson changed as well. If I taught American history to juniors I could get up there and I could talk for a long time and hopefully hold enough attention to make it work for kids for a while but you can't teach like that for 30 years. (Leon, para. 46)

Leon's reflection on the evolution of his teaching illuminates several points. Notably, he reflected on the changes technology had on his practice, and the realities of a career working in schools. While Leon suggested he could rely on more traditional teaching methods, he recognized they were unsustainable and becoming redundant due to technology. Technological advancements provided Leon with the opportunity for more accessible teaching methods as well as forcing a reorientation of how he thought about teaching and learning.

Marty saw it as an "imperative" that teachers must reckon with the realities of technology and what that meant for the role of the teacher. "We have to adapt," he argued, "if you're not adapting as a social studies teacher it becomes a disservice…it is imperative for social studies teachers…to be flexible." Marty conceptualized adaptation as relating to both classroom resources and, particularly given the COVID-19 pandemic, what it means to be a teacher in a modern classroom. Marty recognized a symbiotic relationship between technology and modern education that was redefining the ontology of teaching. Larry argued, "7th and 8th graders are incredibly tech-savvy because they're the first generation that had iPads when they were three or four so you don't actually have to explain to them how it works" (Larry, 46). Larry's statement

highlights the fact that technology is no longer an added component to education but an integral part of human social development.

Technological advancement reframed teachers' considerations of knowledge itself. Susie campaigned for a move away from the memorization of dates and figures because "you can Google anything. Before people might think you're really good at history if you could name all the presidents in order. Now you can look up a flowchart in 10 seconds and list them all" (Susie, para. 60). The role of the teacher has been drastically altered by technological innovation and teachers were hyper-aware of this. "I can't compete with this," stated Jeff, pointing to his phone (Jeff, para. 33). For Jeff, technology presented teachers with the need to reconsider their role because traditional knowledge has been entirely displaced by technology.

Where teaching was considered, historically, as providing students with knowledge, modern teaching was seen as guiding students into self-actualized learning in socially applicable scenarios which, inevitably, involved accepting technological advancement in a digitally saturated society. Although some teachers understood technology as some form of a teaching aid, underneath these responses lay a symbiosis in which society had absorbed technology to become part of its identity.

Summary

Teachers considered the impact of technology an inevitable part of education. In practice this required adaptation and helping students to use technology effectively, whether through media literacy, using iPads and Chromebooks in classrooms, or other methods of incorporating technology into the classroom. Underneath this however, was a belief that teaching itself was changing ontologically; no longer were teachers arbiters of knowledge but, since they could not compete, had to redefine their roles. Furthermore, teachers reconsidered the role of the teacher in

line with pedagogical change which, in turn, was a reflection of their own beliefs on the purposes of social studies education. There existed in each interview a clear thread between the teachers' beliefs about the purposes of education, social studies education, and their role as a teacher which then manifested itself in practice. On top of this were other external pressures, particularly socio-cultural pressures. The following section explores these external socio-cultural pressures in greater detail.

Section Three: Socio-Cultural Pressures

Social studies is inherently tied to social issues. It is therefore to be expected that teachers made sense of the world around them as they conceptualized the purposes of social studies education and enacted these purposes in the classroom. The following section explores two common areas of social pressure, current events and everyday classroom dilemmas.

Current events emerged from the data as an ongoing and consistent concern among teachers who were eager to provide space in the classroom for students to grapple with current events or learn to deal with them in the future. Given the timeline for this study, which took place throughout 2020 and 2021, teachers reflected on three major events, the COVID-19 pandemic, the racial reawakening of the United States and the Black Lives Matter movement, and political tensions surrounding former President Trump and the election of President Biden. In these instances, teachers grappled with the pressures of unbiased, bipartisan educational aims alongside their own personal ideologies. As a result, teachers often constructed what I call "teacher identities," classroom personas that allowed them to distance themselves from controversial events yet maintain some semblance of personal ideology where they deemed appropriate. For example, teachers were passionate about the Black Lives Matter protests and justified their inclusion based around the social zeitgeist while simultaneously supporting the

protests from an individual perspective. Some teachers were more willing to allow their personal ideologies to shine through than others. Finally, I turn briefly to the pressures of the everyday classroom and the ways in which ongoing social-emotional and student-level pressures influenced their epistemologies including relationships with students and classroom culture. Here it emerged that teachers upheld relationships with their students as a fundamental focus that often transcended overarching purposes. If they felt students required immediate attention in certain areas, teachers were able to deviate from existing protocols or beliefs and serve their students as individuals.

Current Events: Navigating Controversy With a Teacher Identity

2020 and 2021 saw generation-defining socio-political moments on a national and international scale. The events that took place during the course of this study were embraced by teachers, who saw it as both an opportunity and their duty to address them in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers used current events as means of presenting social studies content, particularly history, as directly related to the present.

The COVID-19 Pandemic. The start of the COVID-19 pandemic occurred between the pilot interviews for this survey and the majority of the remaining interviews. As such, the final questions on the "state of the world" (see Appendices A, B) elicited mixed responses. Teachers saw the COVID-19 pandemic as an immediate concern that reshaped their perception of purposes and would have long-lasting effects on how students interact with the world of work.

For Larry, the pandemic gave him the opportunities to realize his purposes for social studies which were constantly evolving in line with social change. He believed the pandemic helped students engage with living history while simultaneously preparing students for a changing future; "the world's changing and you are a part of that process" (Larry, para. 62). Leon

also acknowledged a changing world, arguing that "teachers should be worried about their jobs in some respect because we've demonstrated how we can do this remotely. Maybe not elementary school kids but certainly upperclassmen and high school kids. I'm doing it. We're doing it right now" (Leon, para. 48). While on the surface the COVID-19 pandemic provided opportunities for teachers to relate content to the lives of students, teachers acknowledged the very real possibility of how it could affect the lives of students and teachers in the future. Ted however, disagreed, arguing that his teaching methods, which were chosen directly to adhere with state standards and his own beliefs on the purposes of social studies education, were not possible in an online setting. He described the action civics projects he designed as "almost impossible…to do remotely" due to their interactive nature (Ted, para. 18).

For teachers, the COVID-19 pandemic had a direct impact on their perceptions of purpose. Online education presented the opportunity to speak to relatable content material. However, beneath this lay larger concerns for teachers in terms of their own professional capacities and their students' futures. As a result, teachers pushed back against online education and argued instead for the importance of in-person learning.

A Racial Re-Awakening: Making Sense of the Black Lives Matter Movement. The Black Lives Matter movement saw a resurgence in public attention during 2020 following the deaths of, among others, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor at the hands of law enforcement and members of the public. Teachers recognized the unique place social studies held within the curriculum to address ongoing social unrest and systemic racial inequality. While the events were considered controversial by the wider public, teachers perceived them as an essential topic of conversation within their classrooms, balancing their own ideological views on the protests alongside a genuine belief that social issues lived within the social studies curriculum.

Current events, particularly the Black Lives Matter protests provided teachers relevant material that generated student interest. “If something’s in the media, they’re far more likely to pay attention to it…we got into some really interesting stuff around the portrayal of black lives in the media,” argued Kendall (Kendall, para. 51-52). Marty saw failure to adapt and include current events within the social studies classroom as “a disservice…it’s imperative for social studies teachers now to be flexible” (Marty, para. 36). In the case of the Black Lives Matter movement, teachers allowed their ideologies to shine through. Teachers believed that the issues underlying the Black Lives Matter protests were not new, yet the increased national focus meant including the subject matter in the classroom was essential. Loretta interpreted the increased national dialogue alongside a personal conviction in the sentiments of the movement. She argued,

> I sent an email out to all of our parents and guardians and our students explaining what was going on and offering them a plan for the week of how we were going over everything in current events, saying we are going to have these conversations because they're important to have, and that right now we need to listen to each other and be willing to hear everyone and everything, and an overwhelming flood of thank you, emails and positive notes and encouragement from parents came back. So I felt validated teaching about all this and validated that like, I can feel confident having. Difficult conversations in my classroom. (Loretta, para. 72-74)

In her response, Loretta displayed professional judgment in her decision to include events in her classroom she believed, personally, were important for student learning. Instead of asking parents’ permission, Loretta informed parents of her choices, and then felt validated after the fact.

Teachers were aware of the potential dangers of talking about ideologically charged issues in the classrooms. Ted stated that “I think that as social studies teachers it's become really sticky to talk about some of the disillusionment of some of our good democratic institutions that have happened over the course of not only the four years [of the Trump presidency]” (Ted, para. 51). Like Loretta, Ted allowed his personal ideology to shine through controversy; “I cannot present this [the Black Lives Matter movement] as two sides of a legitimate argument…so we ditched the midterm exam” and his class engaged in student-led discussions on current events. Similarly, Richard, who worked in a school on a military base, perceived “a sense of chaos” in his school environment. Even in such a unique environment for Massachusetts (predominantly conservative) which “does not like to have open public conversations on controversial issues,” Richard shared that a “Chief Master Sergeant in the Air Force who is a Black man…came out very publicly early in the pandemic and said ‘I am a Black man first’...and opened up conversations in the military” (Richard, para. 66). It was clear that although teachers were aware of controversies they were intent on addressing current events in the classroom because they felt passionately about their ideological stances and believed they were supported by their supervisors.

To provide a further layer of protection, teachers sometimes distanced themselves from their practice. Occasionally teachers spoke about their classroom identity as a construction somewhere between their own personal convictions and external pressures from society and the state. Leon referred to his teaching as a “craft” that developed externally from his own identity and incorporated various influences derived from his contexts and personal opinions (para. 5). Hiram referred to his teaching as a changing philosophy that has evolved over time in relation to state mandates and his own experiences. He saw this as a natural process of teaching but noted

its importance particularly when teaching in a politically charged environment that increasingly stifles teachers' opinions and personal beliefs. Roman noted the importance of "forging your individual identity in the classroom," which is a combination of "rules, regulations, laws" and his own ideas which he adapted to make his practice his "own as much" as he could (para. 39). For these teachers, creating a professional teacher identity that navigated the pathways between personal conviction and socio-cultural demands allowed them to maintain a level of personal input in their teaching while maintaining an awareness of and distance from the external pressures and ramifications that came with disobedience.

The Contemporary Political Climate. Politics and the classroom have a controversial relationship in the public eye. In 2019, a bill in Arizona ruled that a teacher "may not…introduce in the teacher's classroom any controversial issue that is not germane to the topic of the course or academic subject being taught" (Educator Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility, 2019). However, it is widely regarded that attempts at teacher neutrality are "unsustainable" or impossible (Cotton, 2006). For teachers in Cotton's (2006) study on controversial environmental issues, for example, the "influence of their own attitudes was greater than they either intended or, in all probability, realized."

Hess and Gatti (2010) acknowledged perceptions of liberal bias in the classroom yet defended the place of politics in the classroom as a natural home for political engagement. Hess and McAvoy (2014) argued that an apolitical classroom is an oxymoron and that students, teachers, and society bring politics within the classroom. Indeed, the data showed that teachers were intent on engaging with political events, seeing it as a fundamental purpose of social studies education, focusing particularly on the importance of democratic political engagement, the era of misinformation, and fostering in their students the ability to listen to and learn from others.

Kendall noted that "everything is political and teachers should be forthright about their beliefs. I think it does students a disservice to not be explicit about your political beliefs" (Kendall, para. 38). There was a general acceptance among teachers that attempts to nurture political engagement in students have failed. Leon referred to the current system as "raising the politically ignorant people…we are making all the mistakes that societies and civilizations have already made…I'm worried about that" (Leon, 53). Ted agreed, stating that,

> The rise in democracies we saw after World War II, some of these democracies have fallen, some are faltering. I would put us in the line of being a faltering democracy. So now I really think we need to prepare kids to be able to go out into the world and our communities and try and restrengthen a democracy we have weakened (Ted, para. 86-87)

Whether education was considered to be failing students currently (Leon) or had done so in the past (Ted), teachers believed that "it's more important than ever for us to support students and think about the other" (Hiram, para. 65-66).

As shown in Chapter Four, thinking about others and civic participation were purposes of social studies education. Marty, for example, wanted his students to develop a sense of authentic listening where students "are able to listen to and think about things which at first you might not agree with." This stance was directly connected to the culture of misinformation surrounding the Trump presidency, which was present throughout teachers' concerns. Gerri described the Trump presidency as "the era…of blatant disregard for factual evidence…it's surprising and sad that so many people don't have the skills to say this is or isn't correct" (Gerri, para. 36).

Classroom Dilemmas

The final category that emerged around socio-cultural pressures affecting teachers' perceptions of the purposes of social studies was classroom-level concerns. At times, teachers

responded to the demands of the classroom by prioritizing contextual demands instead of overarching purposes of education. For example, teachers of immigrant or minority students would often focus on the immediate needs of their students instead of pursuing an overarching sense of purpose in their teaching. In this section I present the pressures of everyday classroom concerns including the practical realities of teaching and classroom culture.

The practical realities of teaching, for some teachers, overwhelmed grander overarching purposes of education and meant they focused on the immediate day-to-day needs of their classrooms. While teachers still retained overarching goals for education and their classes, these were pushed aside for pressing classroom issues. For instance, Larry stated that "if you ask me on a day to day level…do you feel like you're contributing and creating active and thoughtful citizens I might be more likely to say no rather than yes" (Larry, para. 34). Instead, Larry felt the day-to-day pressures of his 7th and 8th grade classrooms including state frameworks, content dilemmas, and meeting the academic needs of his students meant that any overarching sense of purpose was something his students "stumble[d]" upon (Larry, para. 36).

Navigating the daily realities of teaching was described by Hiram and Susie as "survival mode" (Susie, para. 32). Both Hiram and Susie regretted the extent to which any grander sense of purpose was dwarfed by the daily pressures of teaching. Leon reflected on the innumerable considerations in-service teachers have to make each day, stating

> Yeh, I don't really think about how it's going to make them better citizens, I'm really focusing on...classroom teachers are in the shit so much you know, we don't really come up for air that often, I'm much more…concerned with… [whether] my directions are clear enough that the skills I want them to walk out with today can be applied and assessed… all within 1 or 2 classes. (Leon, para. 38)

Leon's honesty, together with Hiram and Susie's reflections, highlighted the ongoing pressures confronting pre- and in-service teachers which resulted in them losing sight of overarching purposes and focusing instead on the immediate needs of their students. These immediate needs included a desire to support students and their contextual challenges, alongside typical classroom needs such as student engagement, behavior management, and assessment.

Summary

Teachers navigated their practice in a somewhat confusing fashion, offering moments of resistance and compliance in line with their own beliefs about the purposes of social studies and in tension with internal and external pressures. State frameworks were met with varying levels of resistance and compliance depending on the extent to which the teachers' personal beliefs aligned with the state frameworks and their level of teaching experience. In-service teachers were far more likely to resist state frameworks, particularly veteran in-service teachers. Those teachers that resisted in an active way did so, in part, because they felt supported by their supervisors. Pre-service teachers tended to like the frameworks as they provided guidelines and a sense of professional cohesion that they would have found impossible to create on their own.

With reference to the Massachusetts 2018 reforms, most teachers were supportive of their aims and content, particularly the 8th grade civics standards and student-led projects. That being said, teachers believed media literacy, what they considered to be an important component of the standards, had received insufficient attention and support. The data suggested that teachers operated according to their own ideological convictions and navigated state frameworks in relation to their level of experience. Furthermore, it seemed that teachers were more concerned with debating the content of the standards rather than the existence of the standards themselves. Resistance appeared in relation to individual standards or moments and often teachers called for

standards reform rather than abolition, although they did not appear (on the whole) to consider it part of their professional duty to push for these changes.

Teachers were intent on incorporating ongoing socio-political issues within their classroom irrespective of wider social opinions. The COVID-19 pandemic, technological change and other current events were incorporated into each classroom and teachers were eager to address issues head on. This may be, in part, due to the nature of Massachusetts, a politically liberal stronghold in which teachers felt comfortable to teach progressive viewpoints. Nonetheless teachers were aware of social tensions yet continued to teach to their convictions.

In order to protect themselves from external interventions, teachers constructed teacher identities that combined their own ideological perspectives and professional capabilities to keep some semblance of distance and objectivity from the material (although they unanimously recognized that an apolitical classroom is an impossibility). Roman described "forging your individual identity in the classroom" as a process of balancing personality and ideology with school systems and frameworks. Roman's view summarizes the responses of most teachers throughout this chapter; external pressures were met with a deep connection to individual conviction. Teachers felt relatively free to allow their ideological perspectives to shine through.

The purposes of social studies, as outlined in Chapter Four, were clearly influenced by a variety of internal and external pressures, three of which I explored in this chapter. Depending on the extent to which teachers' own internal perspectives on purpose aligned with external pressures determined the amount these pressures affected their perceptions of purpose. The underlying theme, whether reacting to standards, evolving pedagogies, or social change, was that teachers prized autonomy and respect for their contexts above all else.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This dissertation aims to generate theory about how teachers in Massachusetts perceived the purposes of social studies education in relation to recent policies and ongoing social, educational, and technological change. In the previous chapters I have presented my research as a grounded theory study that unfolded over the course of a year and elicited some powerful conclusions. In this sixth chapter I speak across both research questions and push for a reconceptualization of the purposes of social studies education. I present five major findings that develop new concepts that suggest ways of rethinking social studies education. These address:

1. Instrumentalization and anti-intellectualism inherent in social studies education.
2. The absence of a singularly accepted purpose for social studies education.
3. The possibility of "fluid purpose" in social studies education.
4. The alienation of teachers as professionals and resulting levels of resistance or compliance to social expectations.
5. The ontologically evolving nature of teaching and the creation of a new social studies teacher identity to deal with contemporary social and political problems.

As a study rooted in the methodology of grounded theory, I allowed each of these theoretical concepts to emerge from the data itself before, here, relating them to existing literature and making a new contribution to theory.

Following a detailed analysis of each section, I show how they related to one another to build a unified theory of contemporary social studies education. Following this, I present the limitations of this dissertation and explore possible future research directions. Finally, I offer a conclusion in which I redress the overarching research question, "How do teachers perceive the purposes of social studies education?"

Instrumentalization and Anti-Intellectualism

Dichotomies of Purpose

Teachers created several dichotomies when considering the purposes of social studies education. Most prominently, teachers perceived a debate over whether the outcome of social studies should be the acquisition of skills or content. This dichotomy existed for teachers in educational circles as well as widespread social conceptions of social studies education.

In addition, teachers fought against what they perceived to be a generally held belief that social studies was dry or boring, whereas in reality they found it to be personally interesting. They suggested that negative conceptions of social studies often occurred around traditional pedagogies that failed to recognize the colorfulness of historical narrative and its relevance to the present day. They rejected the idea that social studies must entail rote memorization and stale didacticism.

These dichotomous relationships perceived by teachers are not new. In Chapter Two I explored the contested purposes of education between social efficiency advocates and child-centered social meliorists. The swinging pendulum evident throughout the history of educational change was evidenced in the responses of the teachers in this study. On the one hand, teachers supported the importance of social-facing skills-centered social studies instruction, yet at the same time spoke of the immediate needs of their students and the desire for student-centered curriculum design.

It is clear that social efficiency was baked into the formation of the social studies curriculum and any attempts to transcend this are fighting a losing battle; the legacy of the 1916 standards reform lives in the very bones of social studies education (Evans, 2004; Hertzberg, 1981; Saxe, 1991, 1997). Teachers were, on the one hand, adamant to promote a progressive,

child-centered, social-meliorist influenced curriculum through contemporary student-led pedagogies. At the same time, they adhered to the calls of social efficiency and instrumentalized educational goals. Dewey's (1916) criticism of social efficiency that relegated children to a "waiting list" (p. 63) for adulthood seemed alive and well for these teachers. Nonetheless Bobbitt's (1924) belief that the role of education was "to prepare for the fifty years of adulthood, not for the twenty years of childhood and youth" also endured (p. 9). Young (2008) argued that the technical instrumentalization of education is not necessarily wholly negative. While it has become synonymous with the education system for some, its acknowledgement that all students (and institutions) consider the utility of their learning in relation to the economy and future job markets simply recognizes enduring educational and social realities.

Perhaps then, it is the nature of contemporary American education to oscillate between neoliberal, neoconservative traditionalist instrumentalism and postmodernism; between social efficiency and social meliorism. Teachers in this study exhibited this tension between top-down policy and bottom-up student-centered receptivity. Yet this tension between theory and social reality need not be considered problematic (Young, 2008). Indeed, if the nature of educational change is considered an ongoing struggle for truth and harmonious living, it may be that embracing this evolution is beneficial. Instead of deciding *between* policy and theory, social efficiency or social meliorism, it is instead possible to allow both to coexist or, as Pangle and Pangle (1993) argued, to accept that the two *must* and *should* coexist. Indeed, without acknowledging the dynamic nature of history, it is difficult to imagine that there should be one obdurate purpose of social studies that should endure unchanged over time. This is the foundation of my later development on the fluidity of purpose.

The debate between skills and content may, in fact, be intrinsic to the discipline itself, suggesting a dialectical tension that is necessary for the survival of effective education. Pangle and Pangle (1993) argued that "education will thrive in the United States only if it is nourished from more than one spring" (p. 286). For Washington and Jefferson, argued Pangle and Pangle, this meant "the patronage of prominent individuals is therefore crucial, and especially the leadership that stresses these aspects of education that the nation is most likely to neglect." This was attainable through integrated "continual practice" in moral and emotional skills such as "orations, debate, and journalistic writing" (Pangle & Pangle, 1993, p. 286). Pangle and Pangle's argument suggests that skills and content are *both* necessary for functional and meaningful social studies education. Building on Tocqueville's (1951) warnings of overly-individualistic democracies (such as the United States) Pangle and Pangle concluded that problems inherent within democracy are "the proclivity to undervalue learning and the arts, or to demand that they be productive of other goods," the "diminished respect for or understanding of the radically detached contemplative life," and "the disregard of obligations to future generations and even to distant fellow citizens" (Pangle & Pangle, 1993, p. 285). In individualistic societies, collectivism (and thus traditional conceptions of democracy) is thrown aside in favor of individual progress. Only through a combined attention to the skills available through content-driven instruction, argued Pangle and Pangle (1993), can the purposes of social studies succeed without collapsing into "apathetic cynicism" and social breakdown (p. 286). Just as the pendulum swings between neoconservatism and postmodernism, so social studies education appeared to swing between skills and content. As such, a reconceptualization of social studies in line with Young's (2008) theory of social realism and Pangle and Pangle's (1993) combined attention to skills and content is warranted.

Despite the warnings of Pangle and Pangle (1993) and Tocqueville (1951) however, teachers in this study felt obligated to ally themselves with a side of the debate. In an effort to appease individualistic social rewards, given the pressures of a hyper-capitalistic, economically-motivated, standardized society, and underlying social conceptions of the nature of social studies education, teachers sought to re-legitimize social studies education by falling into the trap of "demand[ing] that they be productive of other goods": skills (Pangle & Pangle, 1993, p. 285)

Re-legitimizing Social Studies

Teachers were concerned with legitimizing social studies education by emphasizing its utility beyond the curriculum. The re-legitimization of social studies education was contextualized within a common belief that social studies education was declining in importance. The declining state of social studies education is not a new phenomenon. Throughout its history, interest in social studies education has peaked and troughed. Increased standardized testing and reforms such as the No Child Left Behind Act in the accountability era have placed a heavy emphasis on STEM education and refocused educational attention away from social studies education (Burroughs et al., 2005; Grant, 2007; Ross et al., 2014).

While teachers in this study understood the possibilities of life without standardized testing, such as greater pedagogical freedom, they also recognized the declining national emphasis on social studies which, in turn, resulted in falling funds, diminished enrolment in higher education degrees, and fewer career opportunities (Burroughs et al., 2005). Between 2002 and 2007, 36% of students received decreasing amounts of instructional time in social studies education. (Kalaidis, 2013) While in the 2000s the federal budget allotted around $40 million a

year to civics education, in 2019 this was “down to $4 million, compared to $3billion on STEM education” (Adams, 2019, para. 8).

Between 2011 and 2015 no federal funding was provided for social studies education (White, 2015). The recent billion-dollar injection of funds into civics education is notable and promises to revitalize the discipline after years of official neglect and the assignment of social studies to weak disciplinary status (Goodson, 1981). Today, social studies has once again received renewed attention and teachers in these interviews were intent on legitimizing social studies education through its utility in later life and wider social circles.

With the rise of the information age, content-oriented social studies education appears to be on the decline. Wineburg (2018) argued that “in an age when no one regulates the information we consume, the task of separating truth from falsehood can no longer be for extra credit. Google can do many things but it cannot teach discernment” (p. 8). This perspective signals a move away from the importance of content knowledge and towards application, particularly skills. In this study teachers seemed to agree, arguing that while “content…is what the standards are…that’s what the subject is,” (Rava. para. 18) modern social studies education is about skills-acquisition. Indeed, the death of the disciplinarian was noted as early as Dewey, who condemned the rote memorization of facts and dates, favoring instead an approach that allowed students to grapple with the existing social order (Dewey, 1903, 1916; Saxe, 1991).

Social studies (and perhaps education as a whole) has shifted, as Young (2008) argued, towards the instrumentalization of content for the production of skills. Education is more about utility and pragmatism today. This trend has not appeared from thin air. Hofstadter (1963) famously conceptualized a growing distrust for and active disengagement with “the critical mind” which subsided into anti-intellectual fluctuations throughout American history (pp. 4–6).

Teachers in this study believed social studies education has become embroiled in a dichotomous debate between skills and content, opting almost unanimously for allegiance with the importance of skills over content. While this may be symptomatic of a fresh wave of American anti-intellectualism, there appears to be a further trend away from the intrinsic value of educational knowledge and towards instrumentalization where the success of education is defined by its utility.

What underlies this transition (if indeed it is a transition as opposed to a moment) is the move away from clearly defined educational purposes such as were evident in the writings of the Founders of the early American republic and later in the common school movement of the 1830s, when education was intended to promote the ability to preserve and strengthen democratic principles. After the Civil War, these concepts evolved into American pragmatism, considered by many to be "America's most distinctive contribution to Western philosophy" (McDermid, n.d., para. 11). This includes Dewey's (2008) application of inquiry to morality and politics (Sorrell, 2013) and James' (2014) contention that truth is "the expedient in the way of our thinking" (p. 106). Rorty's (1999) work highlights the utility of language when approached by mutually engaged parties.

Irrespective of which tradition one adheres to, the application of learning to the pursuit of the truth and the good society is a consistent and often unquestioned theme of social studies education. For the teachers in this study, there appeared a need to (re)legitimize social studies education in accordance with its utility. A re-emergence of anti-intellectualism, the instrumentalization of education in line with American pragmatism, and increased individualism in a neoliberal democracy, highlighted a trend away from content-oriented study and towards the importance of skills-acquisition.

Multiple Purposes of Social Studies Education

There was no singular, unified purpose of social studies education outlined by teachers throughout this study. Instead, teachers balanced multiple purposes for social studies education, emphasizing some more than others based on different internal and external pressures. Ultimately, any overarching beliefs on the purposes of social studies education were pushed aside to prioritize the immediate needs of students in their contexts.

The purposes of social studies education were considered an integral part of (or indeed synonymous with) realizing the purpose of education writ large. Teachers in this study conceptualized the purpose of education as some degree of social realism, challenge to, or growth within existing social structures. In response to this they believed the purposes of social studies were a combination of application, an intrinsic disciplinary interest, and connection with the human experience. Ontologically, purpose appeared to be both an abstract or external concept that operated independently of the teachers' own persons and reacted to social and educational change, and a personal manifestation of their ideological convictions. In other words, some teachers considered the purpose of social studies education to be an evolving concept that operated in flux with social and educational change which was designed by consensus and then applied to their practice. Loretta, for example, remarked on "a bigger push in the last decade…of looking at the whole student and the social, emotional growth of kids and how that is important for academic success" (Loretta, para. 18). Implicit within Loretta's statement here is an external consensus on what is worthy of learning. The "push" Loretta described, comes from external forces that required her to adapt her teaching in line with the direction of the purpose of education.

On the other hand, several teachers spoke of their own, personal purposes of education which were then expressed externally through their practice. For Gerri, the purpose of education "has definitely changed over time because when I was younger, I thought, you go to school to get a job…but as I've gotten older, I feel like education can be a space where people can better understand how the world works" (Gerri, para. 24), Within Gerri's statement was a belief that the purpose of education is unique to her worldview. Gerri did not consider purpose as something external which was then applied to her practice. Rather it was the manifestation of her changing beliefs about the world. Consistent across all conceptualizations of purpose was an understanding that the purpose of social studies education, whether arising from the individual or applied from a collective consensus, was in constant change in relation to the individual and the social.

It became clear that teachers did not consider there to be a singular purpose for social studies education. Instead, the purpose of social studies education, whether personal and individual, or externally conceived, was a collection of different purposes. This indicates the open-ended and plural nature of the discipline, which may be distinct from other research in mathematics of the natural sciences.

The Emergence of Fluid Purpose

Prioritizing Survival

The multiple purposes of social studies acknowledged by teachers in this study were emphasized to varying degrees based on a number of internal and external pressures. In the following section I argue, based on teachers' prioritization of purposes and their role as gatekeepers, for a reconceptualization of purpose as "fluid," in line with a call for increased professional autonomy.

Teachers acknowledged the existence of multiple purposes of social studies education ranging from the cultivation of applicable skills to engagement with the human experience and the discipline of social studies itself. There was no discernable difference between pre-service and in-service teachers' perspectives on the purpose of social studies education aside from a slight idealism among pre-service teachers and a social realism among in-service teachers. All teachers recognized grander overarching purposes for social studies education. What became clear however, was that when certain situations arose, teachers would re-prioritize their overarching viewpoints and favor the immediate needs of their students. These needs were rooted in their individual social and educational contexts whether in relation to the students themselves or the teachers' professional duties such as classroom management, curriculum matters, or, for pre-service teachers, the demands of their student-teaching programs. Teachers displayed their professional judgment in interpreting each individual student's position on Maslow's hierarchy of needs; if they felt students' basic or psychological needs were not being met they forwent any possibility of pushing students' higher-level needs. While teachers recognized the state's purposes as commensurate with Maslow's conceptualization of self-actualization, they always prioritized student's lower-level needs first.

Student survival took precedence over any grander sense of purpose for teachers, particularly for teachers of low-income or minority students. Survival was not conceptualized as biological in nature, rather it was social. Logan described survival as learning "to use a checkbook…writing a letter to a bank…practical wisdom" (Logan, para. 36-75). For Willa this involved "helping that individual student in front of me figure out their life" (Willa, para. 102). Attending to the students as they appeared in front of her was seen as far more important than "these wide-ranging purposes" which were deemed "irrelevant" by Willa (para. 102).

Similarly, for Jeff, whose students were 95% first-generation Hispanic immigrants, state policy and neatly packaged statements of purpose were "bullshit" compared to the need to provide his students with technological skills essential for survival such as learning to write and address emails clearly (Jeff, para. 47). When push came to shove for all the teachers in this study, particularly those teachers of minority students or teachers in under-privileged areas, overarching ideas of purpose were re-defined as helping their students to meet the requirements of social survival. While existing overarching purposes were not dismissed, the need for student survival forced teachers to reconceptualize these purposes and to incorporate, as foundational elements, the need to provide students with the means for survival. Along with the reconceptualization of overarching purposes, policy and other external pressures were forced into realignment with meeting students' survival needs.

Towards a Fluid Conception of Purpose: Professional Judgment and Autonomy

What is evident here is the need for a fluid conceptualization of purpose. This needs to be one that allows teachers to consider the purpose of social studies in relation to the everyday needs of their students, alongside grander overarching goals for education. Implicit within this is a need to respect the professional judgment of teachers, predicated upon the proximity of teachers to the real existential conditions of their students and the challenges that they will face in negotiating a society with many strengths but also grave injustices. In this study, numerous teachers exhibited professional judgment throughout their practice. This occurred irrespective of their level of experience. While it appeared that many teachers were already exercising a fluid approach to purpose, I argue for a more explicit and intentional approach to the concept of fluidity.

Logan, a pre-service teacher with no classroom experience, exhibited professional judgment in relation to his lesson planning, selecting materials he liked and thought might be relevant for his students. Marty, an in-service teacher, talked about the "imperative" for teachers to "be flexible" and "invite pivots" away from the curriculum to promote engagement and student interest (Marty, para. 36). Susie reflected on her time as a pre-service teacher, acknowledging that her practice was primarily concerned with "ticking off boxes" rather than "getting to my personal goals" (Susie, para. 37). As such, when she graduated into the ranks of in-service teachers, Susie felt more able to express her personal professional judgments.

Professional judgment was something teachers exhibited on a daily basis and was something they recognized explicitly and expressed implicitly through their actions and instructional choices. That being said, teachers were eager for more space to make their own instructional choices. Leon, an in-service teacher, argued that "I believe that more agency should be given to teachers" (Leon, para. 54). For Leon, administrators treated teachers with "kid gloves sometimes" which played into teachers' proclivity to be "very sensitive, very territorial…risk averse" and to "struggle with being told to adapt" (Leon, para. 55). To meet the growing calls for student-led learning and student empowerment, Leon felt that teachers should be given similar freedoms in their practice. Indeed, Jeff, reflected on what he believed to be the widespread de-professionalism of teachers compared to other careers. He stated,

> We would never ask a surgeon to perform a surgery that they are unqualified for. All right. We tell lawyers, it is the worst idea for them to represent themselves…Teaching is the only profession where we say you have to show the state every five years that I am competent. I've taken additional classes. I have a masters. I'm working on a second master's and yet they don't trust us to do our job. We're the only profession that is

> constantly forced to demonstrate our professionalism. You would never get doctors or lawyers in a room and say, 'Now, let's practice those skills.' But teachers routinely go into faculty meetings where we're going to demonstrate a turn and talk. No, no. We're professionals. Yet we have to prove we are professionals. Let us do our jobs until we're showing you we're not. (Jeff, para. 75-77)

Jeff expressed his frustration at the lack of professional judgment afforded him by administrators. He felt babied by the system in spite of his many qualifications and years of experience.

The insecure professionalism of teachers is an ongoing concern among scholars. Darling-Hammond (1990) argued that "the individual needs of students are difficult to accommodate" (p. 25). The "bureaucratic organization of schooling and teaching requires practice that is procedure-oriented and rule-based" whereas, in contrast, professionalism is not "compensation or status"-based but practice rooted in the "welfare of the clients" (Darling-Hammond, 1990, p. 25). Thus, teachers experience constant tension from top-down bureaucratic oversight and bottom-up needs from students. Professional teaching communities, argued Darling-Hammond (2017), are grounded in collaborative, ongoing improvement and empower teachers to "use their enhanced skills to take on new roles in schools and school systems" (p. 105). Indeed, Talber and McLaughlin (1994) found that teacher professionalism was inherently localized, suggesting that teachers' professional status was impacted by the collegial relationships in their individual school departments. In this dissertation, teachers exhibited these tenets of professionalism alongside a desire for more room for creativity, expression, and freedom to thrive as professionals.

Given that teachers practiced their professional judgment irrespective of their experience and still felt the room for improvement, giving teachers more freedom to adapt their teaching to suit the needs of their students would be beneficial. Yet, calls for increased professional judgment alone are insufficient. As Cuban (1967) argued, a shift in pedagogy was not enough to serve the needs of teachers in the civil rights era. Instead, reconceptualizing the epistemology of teaching (as Young suggested) and reconsidering the role of purpose in education is necessary. It is for this reason I suggest the importance of fluid purposes (Young, 2008).

Providing teachers with the freedom to formulate and enact their own purposes, specific to their students and contexts would involve granting them increased autonomy over the curriculum, teaching methods, and content so they could decide as professional and knowledgeable members of local, national, and international communities what their students need in social studies education. Furthermore, a fluid approach to purpose would allow teachers to address the foundations of knowledge directly. The transdisciplinary nature of social studies supports such an approach as teachers would be able to mobilize content areas, the development of relevant skills, and produce their own curricula that speaks to the needs of their students.

The data suggests that teachers are already implementing this idea of fluid purpose to an extent. However, the existence of resistant ways of thinking indicates that teachers still felt a lack of freedom to be truly fluid in their perception and implementation of purposes. A more fluid sense of purpose could empower teachers to make sense of the needs of their classrooms and combine their own individual beliefs and convictions alongside social realities and contexts to employ diverse, relevant teaching methods and select relevant content. This reconceptualization of the foundations of social studies education is a radical departure from neoconservative and postmodern theories of knowledge and embraces Young's (2008) theory of social realism.

Teacher Alienation: Resistance, Compliance, and Policy Interpretation

Teacher Alienation: The Educational Machine and the Discipline of Social Studies

Concurrent to enacting instances of professional judgment, teachers made sense of policy and social pressures and responded in their practice. As I explored in Chapter Five, teachers were alienated in relation to policy and other external pressures which resulted in varying amounts of resistance or compliance. Clark (1959) argued that alienation is synonymous with powerlessness, not in relation to an overarching social referent (as traditionally conceptualized) but within specific organizational systems. He defined alienation as "the degree to which man feels powerless to achieve the role he has determined to be rightfully his in specific situations" (Clark, 1959, p. 849). Shepard (1973) agreed, describing alienation in the workplace as powerlessness which "occurs when the worker feels that he is an object dominated and controlled by other people or by a technological system of production and thus, as subject, he cannot alter his conditions" (p. 66).

In the domain of education, Pugh and Zhao (2003) found that teacher alienation occurred when teachers' individual agency conflicted with the constraints of reality. In their study, Pugh and Zhao wrote that grant funding, which nominally was intended to accelerate teacher empowerment, resulted instead in "alienation — feelings of negativity toward those realities (peers, administrators, organizations) that dashed their hopes — which was manifest in these teachers' attempts to dissociate themselves from the confining realities" (p. 198). As a result, teachers withdrew from what in point of fact were disempowering circumstances when they were confronted with the enormity of external pressures. Instead, they resorted to alienated compliance or resistance.

Teachers in this study exhibited different kinds of alienation. Several teachers felt disillusioned with the aims of policy when faced with the realities of their situations. For these teachers, policymakers were disconnected from the reality of the classroom. The only mitigating factor in preventing the alienation of these teachers from their professions appeared to be the lack of state testing, which allowed teachers freedom to design their own curricula and supportive mentors who allowed them to make progressive instructional choices.

Private school teachers and teachers with significant experience felt the most equipped to deal with the effects of alienation, by choosing to resist state policy. Some teachers refused flat out to adopt state policies, arguing that they knew what their students needed more than "what some guys sitting at a desk who wants to craft education policy thinks" (Sandy, para. 5). Others applied state policy after-the-fact, confident that it would appease any keen-eyed observers while simultaneously fulfilling their own intentions.

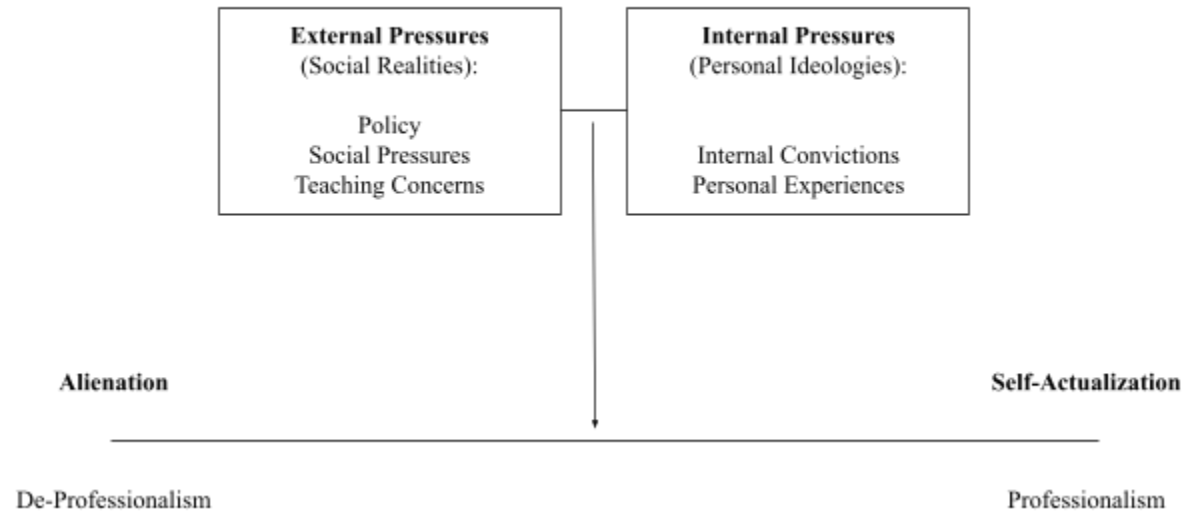
Furthermore, teachers were alienated from the discipline of social studies. The majority of teachers brushed content aside, foregrounding skills acquisition. For most teachers, social studies content presented a way to improve skills with deeper purposes, address personal interests, and to define the discipline. Social studies content was seen as a means for engaging students with "what's more important…high-level thinking" (Rava, para. 18).

On the opposite end of the spectrum were teachers who experienced self-actualization in their practice. Self-actualization, argued Maslow (1954), is "growth-motivated" as opposed to alienation which is "deficiency-motivated" (p. 159). Whereas alienated teachers felt divorced from their role as teachers, their subject material, and their ability to make meaningful autonomous decisions based on the extent to which their personal ideologies aligned with social

realities, self-actualized teachers responded to their contexts and felt intrinsically motivated in their teaching decisions.

Figure 6.1.

Teacher Alienation as a Response to External and Internal Pressures



Note. Figure 6.1 shows the balance of internal and external pressures which led to each teachers' position along the spectrum of self-actualization.

Teachers' decisions to comply or resist state policy arose from both alienated and self-actualized standpoints. Jeff, for example, felt alienated by state policy and therefore enacted his own classroom-level decisions as an individual. In the face of what he saw as out-of-touch state policies, Jeff said "this is my classroom. This is my kingdom." As a result, he deviated from state policy and taught his students skills and content he believed were relevant for them (Jeff, para. 87).

Loretta, however, exhibited self-actualization. While she did not necessarily agree with all of the state's policies, she made informed decisions, in collaboration with others, to pursue

what she believed to be important. Her conviction in her own professionalism meant that she was able to make large curriculum-level decisions. In designing a new civics curriculum, Loretta informed her administrators and her students' parents that she was including certain controversial materials.

Her self-actualization through her work, however, was rare. Most teachers, like Jeff, felt alienated in their practice. As a result, they fell somewhere along the line of resistance to or compliance with state policy based on their level of experience.

Resistance, Compliance, and Teaching Experience

When it came to teachers' decisions on the extent to which they resisted or complied with state policies, there appeared to be some correlation to their level of experience. In-service teachers, particularly those with a significant amount of experience, were more likely to resist state policy than pre-service or early-service teachers. Indeed, teachers within this study seemed to validate Stone-Johnson's (2016) contention that older generations of teachers are more likely to resist change. For younger generations of teachers, argued Stone-Johnson (2016), "change is their norm…[they] are part of a generation that, generally speaking, values balance, freedom, and flexibility" (p. 6). In contrast, "the prior generation…has less experience with the huge societal shifts that have occurred because of technology and globalization," as a result, "the Boomer generation view the current reforms as harmful and insulting, likely in part because such reforms ask teachers for work of a kind that is fundamentally different from this generation's earlier career" (Stone-Johnson, 2016, p. 6).

Goodson et al., (2006) found that teachers resisted change based on social and political nostalgia, including but not limited to a loss of professional independence and autonomy. They noted declining social cohesion, and the "insult" of "standardized reform, which ignores their

professional experience, reframes their work as technical, and values compliance over creativity" (Goodson et al., 2006, p. 55). These themes were evident in this study as well.

Teachers experienced a particular kind of occupational socialization in the transition from idealism as pre-service teachers, to realism as in-service teachers. Whereas pre-service teachers envisioned limitless possibilities for their students, in-service teachers confined these to existing social roles such as employment and political or civic engagement. My conceptualization of these different categories is reminiscent of Haritos' (2004) application of Bronfenbrenner's (1992) "Ecological Systems Theory." The pathway to "becoming a teacher," argued Haritos (2004, p. 637), is inextricably linked to various levels of context. Indeed, pre-service teachers' underlying beliefs are well-established before they enter the classroom (Pajares, 1992), are resistant to change (Weinstein, 1990), and form a lens through which teachers approach their emerging practice (Haritos, 2004; Uhlenbeck et al., 2002). On the whole, these beliefs are often somewhat idealistic (Rust, 1994; Virta, 2002). Haritos (2004) found that "naive and idealistic teaching beliefs of teacher candidates" gave way to "subsequent disillusionment and praxis shock when initially confronted with the realities of the classroom" (p. 650). Indeed, the results of this study indicated that pre-service and early-service teachers were, on the whole, more idealistic about the purposes of social studies compared to veteran in-service teachers, who presented a far more socially realistic perspective and encouraged their students to prioritize survival and security over grander senses of meaning and purpose.

The willingness of certain teachers to resist standards may, in fact, be due to the freedoms afforded them by the state of Massachusetts and the support of their supervisors and colleagues. The lack of state testing for social studies education in Massachusetts was cited by teachers as an important factor in protecting their freedom to make instructional decisions. Furthermore,

Massachusetts' progressive, liberal politics may have meant that topics considered controversial in other states (possibly even nationally) were greeted with more acceptance by stakeholders. Loretta's decision to include controversial topics in her teaching and Richard's ability to teach about issues of race in the traditionally conservative setting of a military base were met with support from local parents and communities.

Teachers as Gatekeepers

Whether teachers resisted or complied with external influences, the extent to which they allowed their individual perspectives to shine through or not, and their perceptions of their professional capacities as alienated or self-actualized, what was certain throughout the interviews was that teachers acted as gatekeepers for the implementation of purpose and policy. At the end of the day, teachers had the final say in the manifestation of purpose and policy. As Thornton (2005) argued, teachers-as-gatekeepers may be "more crucial to curriculum and instruction than the form the curriculum takes" (p. 10).

For the majority of teachers this meant they prioritized student survival above all else. Indeed, it seemed that throughout their sensemaking (of policy and purpose) teachers prioritized Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs beyond all other influences. Students' physiological, safety, and relational needs always came before the desire for students to succeed financially, socially, or academically. There were innumerable instances throughout the interviews of teachers' prioritization of students' basic needs.

Jeff stated that:

> I want my classroom to be a place where they know they can come and their needs will be met…I can come in and I can tell you're shot, you're stressed…Take a break if you need to, put your head down. I can give them a day off. They can't do that in science.

> They can't do that in math…Jeff doesn't bullshit us…he treats us as young people who screw up sometimes but he will also work with us. (Jeff, para. 82-85)

What Jeff alluded to in this quote is the importance of the teacher-student relationship, and the sensitivity required by educators to comprehend and attend to students' needs. Research supports Jeff's stand. Frymier and Houser (2000) found the student-teacher relationship to be at least "equally important" to content mastery in higher education classrooms, suggesting that in lower-level schooling this may in fact be of greater importance (p. 217). Jeff's response, and the response of many teachers in this study, highlighted teachers' proclivity to foreground their relationships with students. These teachers wanted to employ their sensitivity to address the immediate needs of their students, which they believed outweighed more abstract educational aims.

Jeff was not alone in prioritizing his students' basic needs. Richard reflected on the importance of supporting students questioning their gender identities. He stated, "that is not something they would have done in 1990 or 1980 … I want a school without the fear of some terrible ramifications…it's saying, 'I'm here for you. This is going to be a safe place as long as I'm here'" (Richard, para. 74). "The safety of all students" said Sandy, "has got to be number one, because they have to always be safe in the classroom. They have to feel that they can learn in an environment that is supportive" (Sandy, para. 94).

Teachers' prioritization of students' safety was common throughout the interviews and is, undeniably, essential in schooling. However, given the willingness with which teachers emphasized safety beyond other purposes, it is worth briefly entertaining a critical perspective on the role of student safety in social studies education. It is often unquestioned that the "safety" of a school classroom permits greater learning opportunities. Holley and Steiner (2005), for

example, argued that creating a safe space for students, free from psychological and social consequences, is one in which the individual is able to take risks, be vulnerable, and ultimately accelerate their independent learning. Ludlow (2004) disagreed, suggesting that student safety, risk-taking and vulnerability could lead to the legitimization of damaging opinions (purely given their acceptance within the classroom) and, consequently, the further marginalization and oppression of students already at risk outside the classroom.

On the other hand, the "comfort" afforded students by safe classroom environments, argued Barrett (2010), may in fact lead to "learning stagnation" (p. 11). Instead, Barret called for a "civil" classroom as opposed to a "safe" one, which he believed was more damaging to students. Barrett's call for a "civil" classroom, while well-intentioned and logically sound, does not appear to promote realistic classroom aims and undermines teachers' professional capacities to oversee open classroom dialogue. A "civil" classroom may further stunt students' ability to voice and engage with multiple opinions, regardless of how dangerous they may be. Instead, preparing teachers to facilitate civil discussion *within* safe classroom environments and increasing professional development around teaching with controversial issues may allow students to feel vulnerable and willing to share yet also understand the ramifications and consequences of their opinions.

Whether or not Barrett and others' claims of overly-safe classroom environments are injurious to students' academic progression, it was clear in this study that teachers prioritized safety and student needs beyond overarching purposes. Teachers acted as gatekeepers for purpose. They felt able to do so when supported by the state and their supervisors and thwarted when their intentions were undermined. That being said, any overarching sense of purpose was

dwarfed by the immediate need, teachers reported, to provide their students with a safe environment.

The Evolutionary Ontology of Teaching

Defining an Ontology of Change: Technology and Social Influences

Teachers exposed the instrumentalization of social studies content to suit the evolving and increasingly skills-oriented purposes of social studies education. The various dichotomies that emerged throughout the purposes of social studies education and education writ large, according to teachers, led to instances of alienation and a call for greater teacher autonomy. Alongside this I propose a revision of the foundations of social studies knowledge, in line with a social realist perspective, that acknowledges the construction of knowledge *and* its uses in society. This approach seeks to unify top-down policy and traditional neoconservative ideas of useful knowledge with bottom-up teacher autonomy, recognition of student context, and postmodern conceptions of knowledge construction. Inherent within this revision is an acknowledgement of something highly significant that appeared throughout the interviews and constituted one of the major findings of this dissertation. This concerns the degree to which teachers perceived that the ontology of social studies teaching is one in constant flux, which imposed additional stresses and opportunities for teachers in this discipline.

In this final section I explore the ontology of teaching; an ontology that, by its nature, is in continual change. I pay particular attention to the changing role of the teacher. The data suggested that teachers were aware of this ontology of change, viewing it as an inevitability and something they accepted willingly. As a result, they adapted their practice accordingly and were intent on allowing this to continue to happen. This ontology of change, which teachers suggested

had been happening for decades, was evident in the recognition of technological change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the broadest sense, "ontology" can be understood as the "exhaustive classification of entities in all spheres of being" specific to a phenomenon such as teaching (B. Smith, 2008, p. 155). In this dissertation I agree with Vlieghe and Zamojski that the ontology of teaching must follow what Smith (2008) calls a "fluxist" tradition whereby the essence of teaching is thought of as a "set of events and processes," as opposed to a concept or thing (p. 155). Vlieghe and Zamojski (2019) argued for an ontology of teaching that recognizes teaching as a way of "being" rather than "a matter of expertise." Instead of defining teaching as the perpetuation of social, economic, and politically aligned goals, Vlieghe and Zamojski believed that teaching is "meaningful in and of itself" and thus requires an ontological approach (p. 4). Such an approach, they argued, cannot provide a thorough definition of teaching, rather a means of "speaking, thinking, and conceiving" about teaching that "reclaims" it from the risk of being "devalued, suppressed, and illegitimate" (Vlieghe & Zamojski, 2019, p. 5). As Biesta (2005) termed ontology, the "language of education" concerns where "education is" and "language simply describes what 'is'" (p. 54). The results of this study suggested that the ontology of teaching is itself an ontology *of* change, that what it means to be a teacher exists as a constantly evolving process in communication with social, political, environmental, and contextual change.

Vlieghe and Zamojski (2019) claimed that the dichotomous relationship between neoconservatism and "critical emancipation and empowerment" (their terms for Young's (2008) postmodernism) left a soulless ontology of teaching, an "institutional form of education that serves as an instrument to political objectives…empty of inherent meaning…[that] can be put at work in a way that will enslave and reproduce inequality, or in a way that will emancipate and

empower" (p. 154-155). However, teachers in this study experienced the ontology of teaching as inhabiting the space somewhere between these push-and-pull factors and evolving accordingly, at times evolving more in line with one factor than another. Instead of being completely "soulless" or the opposite, critically emancipatory and empowering, teachers in this study positioned the ontology of teaching as existing between these polemics. Richard, for example, described teaching as "pressed" between "the highest national levels" and his own educational contexts (para. 35). He argued, "a lot of us are finding ourselves in front of…dueling priorities" (para. 37-40). For Richard and other teachers, being a teacher involves the ongoing navigation of top-down "soulless" pressures and bottom-up emancipatory empowerment. Reducing the essence of teaching to a dichotomy of a "soulless" versus emancipatory ontology did not capture the process of ongoing tension. At times, teachers felt pressure from above and were left alienated whereas at other times they felt liberated and self-actualized. Being a teacher, they suggested, has not moved from an emancipated ontology to a soulless one but exists in recognition of both.

Teachers were also clear that the ontology of teaching evolves in conversation with current social and political events. They acknowledged the influence of contemporary issues on the ontology of teaching. For teachers in this study, the COVID-19 pandemic and rapid technological change have had noticeable influence on the continually evolving ontology of teaching. "If you're not adapting as a social studies teacher, it becomes a disservice," argued Marty, highlighting the constant ontological re-evaluation of social studies teaching. Based on technological changes, Leon reflected that "my craft has changed…technology has changed the way we teach." For Leon, "craft" seemed to be synonymous with his ontology.

Sandy noted that students are "born into the digital age. They don't know anything other than their iPhones and laptops, and as teachers we have to recognize that as part of the reality of

life now" (para. 59-60). Sandy's statement is perhaps the best example of an ontology of change in teaching; no longer is technology something ancillary to education but something bound to society and, therefore, teaching. The influence of technology on teaching and learning has not moved the ontology of teaching from a specific stance (critical emancipation) to another (soullessness) in any fatalistic sense, rather the ontology of teaching *is* change; technology, argued Sandy, is just part of this change. Accepting technological change and its implications on student identity and learning, teachers argued, is what it means to be a teacher.

The Role of the Teacher and the Creation of a Teacher Identity

In practice, the evolutionary ontology of teaching involves continual realignment with the expectations and demands of what it means to *be* a teacher, including the role of the teacher or what Vlieghe and Zamojski (2019) called "ontological figures." Hiram described his understanding of the ontology of teaching as an iterative process, stating "I don't know that my philosophy of teaching has altered that much, I just think I've added to it" (para. 61). Teachers acknowledged that their roles were changing. Their pedagogies shifted from teacher-centered instruction to student-led learning, from passive learning to active participation, and from physical textbooks to online multimedia integration. Consequently, the role of the teacher was seen as a facilitator rather than a master of content. As Tom argued, "the teacher provide[s] the toys for the sandbox…a teacher is a guide in all of this" (Tom, para. 29-30). The changing role of the teacher clearly demonstrates the ontology of teaching as one in constant change. In this instance the evolution highlights a more "soulless" component whereby teachers merely enable existing content and practice instead of introducing new, disruptive content. In terms of the role of the teacher, it may be that the ontological pendulum is swinging more towards soulless alienation than emancipation and self-actualization but this shift signifies the most recent

ontological development rather than a resigned finality. The ontology of teaching is an ontology of change; the changing role of the teacher is just the most recent manifestation of this.

In order to navigate complex political and social conversations, yet given their universal conviction to talk about controversial issues, teachers created a teacher identity. This was an amalgamation of their personal convictions and their professional duties. Teachers seemed to divorce themselves from their practice at times, relegating their teacher personas to existence within the classroom; an alienation of their being. For teachers like Roman, Richard, and Ted, "forging your individual classroom identity" was somewhat divorced from their own identities; it existed in the classroom and the school as a way to navigate controversial events, incorporating elements of "my own personality" alongside the views of "the different school systems" (Roman, 39-40). Richard reflected on the need to sometimes, "play the good soldier. If these are the standards that I'm supposed to teach, then I'm going to do my best to teach those standards but that doesn't mean I won't expose kids to other things" (Richard, para. 79). Ted reflected on his ability to foreground "most of my beliefs about education" but highlighted a limit to employing all of them in his practice (Ted, para. 31). For these teachers, who felt alienated in their professional practice, the creation of a teacher identity existed as a professional construct distanced from their own identities. Again, this alienated perspective suggests a further swing towards soullessness given that teachers felt the need to create distanced teaching identities divorced from their own perspectives. This shift recognizes the impact of social and political perspectives on teaching and is a further example of an ontology in constant communication with internal and external pressures. I contend that in the case of teaching, a professional ontology defined by its continually changing nature, increasing alienation is part of this change. Attempting to define the ontology of teaching as "soulless" is fatalistic. While teacher alienation

may be becoming more prevalent, it is certainly not all encompassing and does not mean teachers cannot also be self-actualized. Instead "soullessness" is just the most recent characteristic of an evolutionary ontology.

The creation of a unique teacher identity, somewhat distanced from one's own personal beliefs, has been referred to as an iterative process, beginning with pre-service teachers and continuing through ongoing negotiations with authority, boundaries, apprenticeship, and resiliency (Cook, 2009). Parini (2005) argued that the creation of a teaching identity can be traced back to ancient Greek ideas of education, discussing its etymological implications of a mask, including the selection of clothing to convey a certain character. Lang (2007) and Showalter (2003) suggested that a teaching identity reflects, in part, elements of the self and the environment in which one teaches. Teachers in this study showcased a willingness to foreground their personal beliefs in their teacher identities. "Crafting a teaching method," or creating a teacher identity, argued Leon, took a tremendous amount of time and experience. Leon admitted to having multiple identities, one for middle school and another for high school, both of which developed over time. For teachers in this study, the creation of a teacher identity allowed them enough distance from controversial issues and their own personal beliefs so they could tackle issues head-on in the classroom without backlash.

In this section I have outlined the argument for an ontology of teaching that exists in a constant state of flux, in the space between diametrically opposed aims and in constant change with social and political events. Teachers acknowledged an ontology of change in contemporary education, spearheaded by rapid technology change and the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead of resisting or shying away from this shift, teachers embraced their changing ontologies and did so,

in practice, by revising their practice, particularly the role of the teacher in the contemporary classroom.

Conclusion

This dissertation asked, "How do teachers consider the purpose of social studies education?" Teachers interpreted multiple purposes of social studies education. Their implementation of these purposes took into account complex internal and external pressures, their professional alienation or self-efficacy, and the changing nature of teaching and learning. Policy was considered a major push factor in teachers' implementation of purpose, with teachers resisting or complying with policy to varying extents. Given the recent injection of funds into social studies and its reappearance in the zeitgeist it is imperative that thoughtful social studies education takes place. As Young (2008) argued, a thorough reconsideration of the foundations of knowledge are required if we are to avoid the push-and-pull nature of postmodernism versus neoconservatism. This dissertation points towards the possibility for a more fluid approach to the purposes of social studies education, one that recognizes the professional capacities of teachers and provides them with the freedom to attend to the students in their classroom contexts. Since teachers already appeared to prioritize their students' individual needs above grander overarching senses of purpose and, by their own admissions, purposes often seemed distant in their day-to-day practice, acknowledging and embracing a fluid approach to purpose is warranted.

Social studies education, for these teachers, appeared to be legitimized by its utility. An overreliance on skills, argued Pangle and Pangle (1993), will result in a failure to adequately address the problems of democracy. Only through an appreciation of context, content, and skills; through the authentic marriage of the human experience, the discipline, and application will

social studies avoid the pitfalls of past reform efforts. The opinions of teachers are vital in approaching the future of social studies. This dissertation shows that teachers operate as gatekeepers for policy and purpose. Attempting to alter the course of social studies education from an entirely top-down perspective is a dangerous play.

Theoretical Contributions

As a grounded theory study this dissertation has produced several findings with theoretical implications that have encouraged a revision of the fundamental assumptions of social studies education. As such, it is worth noting some actionable and concrete theoretical positions that will help guide future research and practice. For clarity and ease I have summarized these theoretical positions in the following bullets:

- There exist multiple purposes for social studies education which address the different aspects of students' development. Some, on a more fundamental level, encourage students to engage with immediate needs, and others highlight more self-actualized or transcendent possibilities.
- When considering the purposes of social studies education then, we should consider a hierarchy of purposes, one that allows teachers (and students) to acknowledge what is most essential in their learning first, before encouraging students to pursue more self-actualized perspectives. This should involve more research alongside Maslow's hierarchy of needs.
- This entails both increased teacher autonomy and a need for teachers to be prepared and equipped to adhere to multiple different purposes at different times, possibly within individual classrooms. Teachers are more than capable of this. It will require both some level of oversight and increased teacher autonomy. Alternatively, different schools,

teachers, or classrooms could actively pursue different purposes. This would involve a more radical approach and a consideration of access to education itself.

- Social studies education should explore the importance of skills *and* content. While there is currently a narrow focus on skills, a broader appreciation is important, one that acknowledges not just instrumentalized social studies for future employment but encourages skills such as discernment, empathy and criticality that transcend narrow instrumentalization.
- Social studies content is important. Allowing the zeitgeist and educational stakeholders to pull towards a narrow instrumentalization of skills will cause an increased identity crisis amongst social studies educators who are becoming increasingly alienated as professionals and from the discipline as they navigate the profession. Reclaiming knowledge alongside context and theory is essential to appease an ongoing identity crisis.
- Teachers in this study were highly individualistic. While a unified purpose may be an easy way to unite social studies teachers for a common aim it is equally dangerous. That being said, the individualistic stance taken by teachers in this study highlights a wild west in which teachers, given the lack of state oversight, are able to operate according to their own beliefs and opinions. While this should be maintained (and in some instances autonomy increased) a clear marriage between skills and content, and a hierarchical approach to purpose could be beneficial.

Portraying the field of social studies education as one in crisis may feel somewhat dramatic, however, as this dissertation shows, teachers exhibited an ontology of change that was situated within dramatic tensions from stakeholders and purposes of the discipline. The identity of social studies education, it would appear, is confused. In order to rescue social studies education I

believe consideration and future research needs to work from the above theoretical positions and approach social studies as a discipline with multiple purposes that are of equal value.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Sample Initial Interview Protocol

Boston College Lynch School of Education and Human Development

Interview Protocol for an International Study on
"Educational Change and the Future of Work: Towards Meaning and Purpose"

Adapted for a study on teachers' perceptions of purpose in social studies education.
Approval granted by the Boston College IRB.

Researchers: Dennis L. Shirley and David L. Blustein
Research Assistant: William Peters

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this project. I will ask you some general questions to get us started in talking about your impressions of education and work in light of the uncertainty about the future.

Please feel free to chime in with your own impressions and thoughts at any point. We are interested in your story!

Personal Background and Context

1. Where are you in your teaching career?
2. Where do you teach?
3. What ages do you teach?
4. What is your favorite part of teaching?

Meaning, Purpose and Social Studies Education

5. What do you see as the purpose of education?
6. What is the purpose of social studies education?
7. Where does that come from?
8. What is the role of the social studies teacher in that purpose?
9. Has your teacher education program played a role in developing a sense of purpose?

Massachusetts Frameworks

According to the new Massachusetts frameworks the purpose of social studies education is "to prepare students to have the knowledge and skills to become thoughtful and active participants in a democratic society and a complex world." What are your thoughts?

10. Do you agree?
11. Is this a consistent concern in your practice?
12. Has it affected your practice at all in relation to media literacy or civics?
13. Do you have other, more pressing concerns?

Meaning

1. How would you define meaning?
2. Can you think of a moment in the last month where you have had an experience you would describe as meaningful?
3. What are your views about the role of education in helping people to develop meaning and purpose in their lives?
4. How do you feel that schools are doing with providing young people with a sense of meaning and purpose?
5. What are some ways you have observed schools providing students with a sense of meaning and purpose in social studies education?

Technology and the Future of Work

1. What is the role of social studies in preparing students for life beyond education?
2. How do you see your role, as an educator, in preparing students for the future?
3. Is this affected by technology?
4. Does the changing landscape of work (with regards to technology) inform your teaching?
5. How do you feel about the future of work? Optimistic? Pessimistic?

Teaching Experience

1. What is your vision for education, speaking as teacher entering the profession?
2. How have your educational experiences informed your vision for the future of education?
3. What are your priorities, as a (pre-service) teacher, when educating students today?
4. Do you see a disconnect between your ideals for education, and your everyday practice?

The World

5. How do you feel about the world today, that we are sending students into?
6. Do you have any final thoughts that you would like to share with us about the purpose of social studies in the world today?

Thank you for helping us out!

Appendix B: Secondary Interview Protocol

Boston College Lynch School of Education and Human Development

Interview Protocol for an International Study on
"Educational Change and the Future of Work: Towards Meaning and Purpose"

Adapted for a study on teachers' perceptions of purpose in social studies education.
Approval granted by the Boston College IRB.

Researchers: Dennis L. Shirley and David L. Blustein
Research Assistant: William Peters

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this project. I will ask you some general questions to get us started in talking about your impressions of education and work in light of the uncertainty about the future.

Please feel free to chime in with your own impressions and thoughts at any point. We are interested in your story!

Personal Background and Context

1. Tell me a little bit about where you are in your teaching career

Meaning, Purpose and Social Studies Education

2. What do you see as the purpose of education?
3. What is the purpose of social studies education?
4. Where does that come from?
5. What is the role of the social studies teacher in that purpose?

Massachusetts Frameworks

According to the new Massachusetts frameworks the purpose of social studies education is "to prepare students to have the knowledge and skills to become thoughtful and active participants in a democratic society and a complex world."

6. What are your thoughts?
7. The standards placed increased emphasis on media literacy, diverse perspectives, and civics. To what extent are these a consistent concern in your practice?

The World

8. How do you feel about the world today, that we are sending students into?

9. Do you have any final thoughts that you would like to share with us about the purpose of social studies in the world today?

Thank you for helping us out!

Appendix C: Memo Sample

Larry Interview: Brief Notes

Variables:

Coded Segments - 55
Memos in MAXQDA - 3
Years of Experience - 3
Date of Interview - 08/14/2020
Subject - History (and Social Studies)
Grade Level - Middle
School Demographics - Religious (Catholic), State/Public

Notes:

Mentions 12th grade as the culmination of student civic/citizenship (interesting) - preparing students for later life but also the difficulty is that we never get to see "completion" in education - and if we do, will we see it in the 12th grade?!

Another teacher here that balances civics etc. but also has a real interest in history and wants their students to be interested in history - he loves the life in history etc.

I think he wants to be on standard because he doesn't like the CONTENT - it's not a structural dislike/like for the standards but a content thing

Interestingly he develops and adapts and realizes what is relevant to the students (and that is NOW in COVID) - so he wants this flexibility but also recognizes the need for structure (but not for the standards sake but for a content based curriculum) - he is very aware of content - content dictates almost all of his decisions

It's interesting to note that there very rarely is like ONE purpose- almost all teachers see purpose as a complex notion where it has many faces, some of which they prefer over others.

Should I label their purposes? And their purposes for education as a whole?
Note that ALL teachers seem to realize that knowledge comes second to skills - or at least knowledge is not an ideal/aim, even the teachers that are big subject matter people.

One thing I haven't mentioned is this idea of knowing your students better than the standards know your students - knowing who is in front of you as opposed to a one-size-fits-all model - I think I need to go back into the daata to look at this

Focused codes that emerged here:

- Content

- Skills
- Content vs. Skills
- Flexibility
- Pedagogical Change
- Multiple purposes

Tentative theoretical categories:

- Skills vs. Content
- Social Realism
- Multiple Purposes

Appendix D: Teacher Demographics

Name	Interview Date	Years of Experience	Subject and School Level	Pronouns	Racial/Ethnic Identity	School Socioeconomic Status (SES)	School Racial Diversity*
Pre-Service Teachers							
Logan	11/13/2019	0	Middle School Social Studies	he/him	White	Public - Low SES	52% Black, 16 % White 15% Asian
Siobhan	11/15/2019	0	Middle School Social Studies	her/hers	Asian	Public - High SES	92% White 2% Hispanic 0.7% Black
Gerri	10/9/2020	0	Middle and High School Social Studies	her/hers	Black or African American	Public - Middle SES	48% Black 35% White 12% Hispanic
Rava	5/7/2020	0	Middle and High School History	her/hers	White	Public - Middle SES	30% Hispanic 30% Asian 24% White
Kendall	06/06/2020	0	Middle School Social Studies	he /him	White	Charter - Middle SES	50% White 30% Hispanic 8% Asian
Roman	08/14/2020	0.5	Middle School History	he/him	White	Charter - Low SES	68% Hispanic 20% Black 3% Asian

Willa	09/24/2020	0	High School History and Political Science	her/hers	Asian	Private	75% White 10% Asian 4% Black
Connor	09/09/2020	0	High School History	he/him	White	Charter - Middle SES	61% Hispanic 21% White 13% Hawaiian
Greg	09/30/2020	0	High School Social Studies	he/him	Asian	Public - High SES	61% White 14% Asian 9% Black
Tom	4/1/2020	0	High School Social Studies	he/him	White	Public - Middle SES	48% Hispanic 40% Black 5% Asian
Sandy	3/5/2020	0	Middle School Social Studies	he/him	Hispanic	Private	52% Black 26% Hispanic 8% Asian
In-Service Teachers							
Susie	2/10/2020	1	Middle and High School History	her/hers	White	Public - High SES	87% White 7% Hispanic 3% Pacific Islander
Leon	4/16/2020	14	Middle and High School	he/him	White	Public - High SES	69% White 18% Asian

			History				4% Hispanic
Marty	6/26/2020	2	Middle and High School Social Studies	he/him	White	Private	52% Black 26% Hispanic 8% Asian
Larry	8/14/2020	3	Middle School History	he/him	White	Public - Middle SES	46% White 13% Hispanic 10% Black
Jeff	4/17/2020	17	High School History	he/him	White	Public - Low SES	70% Hispanic 14% White 8% Asian
Ted	4/27/2020	21	High School History	he/him	n.d.**	Public - High SES	69% White 18% Asian 4% Hispanic
Richard	09/09/2020	21	Middle School Social Studies	he/him	White	Public - Middle SES	59% White 21% Hispanic 10% Black
Hiram	5/15/2020	16	High School History	he/him	White	Public - High SES	70% White 20% Asian 4.5% Black
MJ	5/4/2020	2	High School Social Studies	he/him	Hispanic	Private	86% White 4% Hispanic 3% Asian
Loretta	6/4/2020	4	Middle	her/hers	White	Public - High	74% White

			School History			SES	11% Asian 5% Hispanic

**Note.* The racial diversity of each school as reported by the state. For pre-service teachers this figure referred to the racial demographics of the school in which they were placed at the time of interviewing.

***Note.* Ted did not wish to disclose his racial information.