Moving Our Field Forward:
Practitioner Research in the Social Studies

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with

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Through practitioner inquiry, social studies educators and researchers can address pressing issues in the field, including improving social studies practice and realizing the democratic potential of social studies education. Practitioner research fundamentally shifts the culture of contemporary school reform and offers an antidote to educational reform efforts that de-professionalize teachers and teacher educators. This whitepaper is meant as a guide to introduce practitioner research - its aims, methods, and purposes. It includes representative examples from the field of the social studies to encourage others to engage in various forms of practitioner research. This whitepaper emerged from a Contemporary Issues Dialogue Session at NCSS/CUFA 2017 and will be presented at the NCSS/CUFA 2018 Symposium, "The Emancipatory Potential of Practitioner Research in the Social Studies." It is offered as a free and open resource for educators. We welcome your comments and questions.

Organization of Whitepaper

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DEFINING PRACTITIONER RESEARCH

Whereas much of contemporary educational reform has focused on top-down, one-size-fits all approaches to changing teaching practice, practitioner research provides a method for engaging social studies teachers, teacher educators, and researchers in grassroots and bottom-up approaches to inquiry. This work connects theory with practice and disrupts traditional notions about agency and positionality in educational research.

> **Practitioner research** focuses directly on issues of practice and is conducted by practitioners who engage in the day-to-day work under study. Forms of practitioner research include action research, self-study, and teacher research.

"Practitioner research" is an umbrella term used to describe research methods conducted by practitioners in order to improve practice. It makes latent understanding explicit by focusing on "insider knowledge." Similar to Dinkelman (2003), we use an "inclusive, broad definition" (p. 16) of practitioner research to include "action research," "teacher research," and "self-study." Across the various forms of practitioner research there are similarities regarding the focus of the research, the importance placed on collaboration, and the desire for systematic inquiry about practice (e.g. Crowe & Dinkelman, 2010; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Practitioner research is grounded in notions of reflective inquiry and experiential education (Dewey, 1933, 1938) and reflection-in-action (Schon, 1983). Practitioner inquiry can be aligned with "practical-deliberative" approaches to research as well as "critical-emancipatory" approaches (McKernan, 1996).

Inquiry as a Stance

We are guided by Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (2001, 2009) concept of *inquiry as stance*, which captures how practitioners engage in systematic and intentional examinations of their own practice. Here practitioners take an intentional stance within

their work to make "visible and problematic the various perspectives through which researchers frame their questions, observations, and interpretations of data" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001, p. 49). Often practitioners situate their inquiry work within communities of inquiry. As Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2001) argue, an inquiry stance involves practitioners, "working within communities to generate local knowledge, envision and theorize their practice, and interpret and interrogate the theory and research of others" (p. 50). Moreover, it provides a method for teachers to share local knowledge, making it public and informing the practice of others. Ultimately, practitioner research has both local and global implications, informing not only the practice of individual practitioners, but also informing a wider community of practitioners.

Cycles of Inquiry

There are a variety of steps described in the research literature for engaging in practitioner research and analyzing practice. Table #1 provides a comparison of these steps as outlined in a sample of action research methods texts.

Table #1 *Action Research and Cycles of Inquiry*

Hendricks (2009)	Henning, Stone, & Kelly (2009)	Kemmis & McTaggart (1999)	Mertler (2014)	Stringer (2014)
Reflect Act Evaluate	Plan Collect data Analyze Reflect	Plan Act Observe Reflect	The planning stage The acting stage The developing stage The reflecting stage	Look Think Act

Across these examples, common features include a reflection or planning phase in which the researcher identifies and observes a problem associated with practice. Originating from a question or problem, the cycle continues as the practitioner researcher engages in action, implementing some kind of change in practice and collecting/analyzing data about the relevant experiences with these changes. An important aspect of the practitioner research methodology is the notion of inquiry as a cycle. Each new insight or finding

leads to new questions to be pursued. The metaphor of a cycle further implies the notion of the practitioner researcher returning again and again to issues of practice that may be persistent, with new ideas and new strategies. In addition to a series of steps completed in cycles, practitioner research emphasizes collaborative inquiry. Projects often bring together educators and researchers to work together in the process of framing research projects, collecting data, interpreting findings, and considering next steps. Finally, an important aspect of this work is sharing it with a larger audience through written reports or presentations.
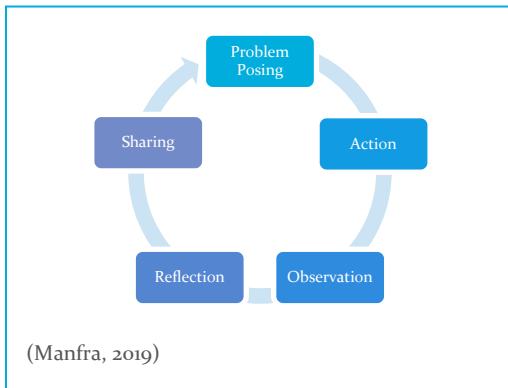
(Manfra, 2019)

Conducting Practitioner Research

Practitioner researchers often use research methods from social science or ethnographic research to collect and analyze data related to practice. These studies emerge from an issue or problem of practice and can be framed around research questions or problem statements. Both qualitative (e.g., interviews, observations, artifacts) and quantitative data (e.g., assessments, surveys) can be collected to provide a basis for the observation and reflection stages of the inquiry cycle. We advise that practitioners keep a research journal to record observations and reflections throughout the project. Interviewing students can be a particularly powerful source of data since it situates teachers as a learners or "students" of their students. Practitioner researchers also engage peers, students, or other stakeholders in data collection, for example through photo-voice projects or practitioner action research (PAR). Once data is collected, practitioner researchers analyze the data using a deductive process. The aim is to enable new understandings to emerge from the data. In turn, these understandings lead to changes in practice.

Practitioner Research Data Collection Techniques

Formative assessments
Interviews/focus groups
Observation
Photovoice
Researcher journal
Summative assessments
Surveys/questionnaires
Work samples

Disseminating Findings

Practitioner research stands to make immediate and powerful contributions to improving the practice of social studies educators who work together to inquire into the teaching and learning challenges they face in their own settings. This form of research contributes more to the field of social studies when findings are shared with audiences beyond the inquiry communities in which they take place. Within the field of the social studies, practitioner researchers are encouraged to share their work at the annual conference of the National Council of the Social Studies, at local and state conferences and in social studies journals. Several social studies journals encourage the submission of action research, including *Social Studies Research and Practice* (http://www.socstrpr.org) and *The Social Studies* (https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/vtss20/current). There are also several regional social studies journals that publish action research studies (i.e. *Oregon Journal of the Social Studies*, *Ohio Social Studies Review*, *Social Studies Journal* [Pennsylvania], *Teaching Social Studies* [New York/New Jersey]).

Change and Practitioner Research

Much like other forms of educational research, the main purpose of practitioner research is to improve teaching and learning. However, practitioner research often emerges from a perceived need or gap in practice. As a result, it provides a framework for teachers and other educators to systematically and intentionally reflect on practice and work to bring about change. This change may include changing "craft knowledge," educational practices, or perhaps impact the larger culture of schooling. By its very nature action research is defined by change. It is often fostered within local grassroots practitioner movements and research communities. According to Johnston (2005), "Taking action and studying its consequences for student learning is the hallmark of action research. The action is intended to create change for the better and the study is intended to find out if it does" (p. 60). Tied to practice, action research can provide a practical approach to solving issues related to practice, while also, perhaps bringing about critical change.

The Emancipatory Potential of Practitioner Research

By bridging the gap between theory and practice, practitioner inquiry is emancipatory - it breaks down traditional barriers in access to research, while also empowering practitioners as researchers and theorizers. When social studies practitioners engage in research on our practice, we shift our approaches to educational research. This shift brings us closer to realizing the democratic potential of social studies education, while also addressing many of the most pressing issues related to social studies practice. According to Heydon (2010), "The critical goal of asking and responding to such questions is emancipatory in nature: Specifically, the inquiry is designed to generate knowledge that can lead to an overcoming of old modes of thought, affect, and action (Habermas, 1972)" (p. 138, reference in original).

> **This shift** brings us closer to realizing the **democratic potential** of social studies education, while also addressing many of the most pressing issues related to social studies practice.

The Potential of Practitioner Research in the Social Studies

By embracing practitioner research, the field of the social studies can perhaps begin to address some of its biggest challenges. These include improving teacher learning, addressing the marginalization of the social studies in the school curriculum, counteracting the marginalization of teacher education brought about by standardization, and engaging community stakeholders in our work. Across the nation, there are continuing controversies about what gets taught in the social studies curriculum and political fights over its standards and assessments. From the growing research on practitioners engaged in inquiry and our own professional experiences, practitioner research offers an important outlet to rethink/revitalize the social studies conversation and its role as the primary school subject that prepares democratic citizens. As a starting point we can begin by engaging teachers in talking about their experiences and providing them with voice through collaborative practitioner inquiry done well.

By engaging social studies teachers and teacher educators in practitioner inquiry that is focused on improving teaching practices, we can mitigate against "technocratic" or "process-product" (Russ, Sherin, & Sherin, 2016) approaches that have long dominated

teacher education. At the same time, as our society becomes increasingly diverse and our schools and classrooms reflect that diversity, we must more thoughtfully engage students, parents, and community members as stakeholders. Through collaboration we can work together to reform our education institutions. Through practitioner research we have a real opportunity to create the space to develop and share new ideas and knowledge because it provides a clear framework, which includes cycles of inquiry and standards for conducting high quality practitioner research. Below we provide examples of social studies educators engaging in practitioner research. Here we begin to address some of the issues raised above and offer advice for educators wanting to engage in this type of work in their own practice.

Examples of Practitioner Research in the Field of the Social Studies

Teacher Research and Social Studies Professional Development

Christopher Martell (Boston University)

Maria Sequenzia (Framingham Public Schools)

In this section of the whitepaper, we reflect on our experiences learning to do teacher research and the impact those experiences have had on our practices as social studies teachers and teacher educators. We use "teacher research" as an umbrella term for PreK-12 teachers researching their own practice, where it is an opportunity for teachers and other school-based practitioners to learn from their work through systematic and critical examinations. We argue that teacher research can be one of the most

> **Teacher Research:**
> (1) Helps teachers change and improve their practice;
> (2) Shows teachers that their knowledge is important and something to value; and
> (3) Shows to outsiders and peers that teachers are intellectuals, which they feel will lead to more professional respect.
> (Martell, 2016)

powerful and useful forms of professional development that social studies teachers can engage in; it not only has an emancipatory potential for practitioners, but it can also empower them to improve their teaching and ultimately the learning of their students. We first describe how we individually came to be teacher-researchers (representing the two most common ways teachers get involved in this work, as graduate students or through professional development programs), which is followed by a section that we co-wrote on how we our work as teacher-researchers is a form of teacher empowerment.

LEARNING TEACHER RESEARCH IN A GRADUATE PROGRAM (CHRISTOPHER MARTELL)

My first experience learning to do teacher research was as a graduate student. I call this my "private phase," where I exclusively used teacher research for my own teaching purposes. In my first year as a high school teacher, I simultaneously began a master's program. In one course, the professor asked us to engage in an "action project" related to our teaching and the topics that we were studying in class. At the time, I taught at an all-male Catholic high school and I had noticed that the students at my school routinely used homophobic language, which was an issue further spotlighted by a student

editorial in the high school's student newspaper. I decided to survey and interview my students about their experiences related to homophobia. The activity was eye opening as a beginning teacher; I was amazed by how my students felt anti-gay expressions and speaking about queer students in negative ways was not only a normal behavior, but actually necessary in an all-male school to prevent gay classmates from "hitting on them" or aligned with the school's religious views (despite some teachers at the school openly challenging the homophobic language and culture that had developed there). Over my three years there, I embedded lessons related to sexual orientation and LGBTQ discrimination throughout my government, U.S. history, and world history courses in an attempt to work against the homophobia that existed among my students. I extended my research into other areas, I would collect data from my students on various topics through surveys and interviews and use that data to inform my own classroom practices.

My second experience learning to do teacher research was as a doctoral student. I call this my "public phase," where I started to share my teacher research with a larger community of teachers and researchers. As a doctoral student, I took numerous required research courses. However, from the general culture of my doctoral program, I was receiving a message that action research did not count as "real research." Despite this, I continued to collect and analyze data from the courses that I taught as a high school teacher. In one study, I examined my students' reactions to me "throwing out" their textbook. This study was accepted as a paper at well-known educational research conference and I eventually published it in an edited book (See Martell & Hashimoto-Martell, 2012). I made teacher research a regular part of my teaching practice and started publishing my findings within the teacher research world and outside of it. With each publication, I gained more confidence in my work. The pinnacle of my teacher research work was the acceptance of one of my studies on how my students of color experienced history class to the NCSS journal *Theory & Research in Social Education* (See Martell, 2013). I left the classroom in the fall of 2013 to become a teacher educator at Boston University. However, to foster teacher research, I have continued to teach district-based professional development courses and graduate courses at my university on action research.

LEARNING TEACHER RESEARCH IN A DISTRICT-BASED WORKSHOP (MARIA SEQUENZIA)

My first experience with teacher research—including my introduction to the phrase itself—was when I took a district-based professional development (PD) course with Chris. I was excited at the chance to take a PD course with him, but I was completely unfamiliar with the concept of teacher research. Initially, I was a little skeptical. I had been a psychology major in college and my work there focused on quantitative research. In my mind, the idea that someone could design a research study and be directly involved in implementing it in her own class was blasphemous; it took some long talks with Chris to convince me otherwise. The more we learned about the theories behind teacher research, the more sense it made to me. And eventually, I realized what I think has most resonated with me since: teacher research is so important precisely *because* the people designing it are so directly involved.

One of the most frequent concerns I hear from new teachers is the sheer overwhelmingness of the job. It is such a fast-paced, emotionally-demanding day that there is usually no dedicated time to reflect on how lessons have gone, how kids are doing, or what changes might be made. Taking Chris's class both allowed and required me to work on that. I literally *had* to make time for careful reflection. The project I chose to do focused on students' perceptions of teachers' political views. I designed surveys, conducted interviews, analyzed my results, re-surveyed and interviewed, and wrote up my findings. In the process, I had a chance to listen to my students more closely, reflect on my own practice more deeply, and apply the theory surrounding teacher research to my own classroom in a way that helped me become a more thoughtful teacher. I set aside specific time to really think about what I was learning through my project, and how I could use that information to make changes in my classroom. I was more deliberate with my language, more attuned to how my students received it, and more proactive about discussing all of this with my colleagues. Those changes were important ones, and they continue to influence my teaching since.

TEACHER RESEARCH AND TEACHER EMPOWERMENT (CHRISTOPHER MARTELL AND MARIA SEQUENZIA)

After reflecting on our experiences learning and doing teacher research, we argue that the process of teacher research is a form of teacher empowerment. Chris has previously described three main themes across beginning teacher-researchers experiences that show its empowering qualities. They include:

(1) It helps teachers change and improve their practice.

(2) It shows teachers that their knowledge is important and something to value.

(3) It shows to outsiders and peers that teachers are intellectuals, which they feel will lead to more professional respect. (See Martell, 2016)

Yet, the empowering impact of teacher research is not reserved only for the individual teacher-researchers. Rather, it also empowers the voice teachers within the wider community of educational research. Educational research is heavily top-down and often produced by people who have limited recent experiences working in schools. That does not negate its value, but it does mean there is a missing voice in the literature. The people working directly with students every day, who see firsthand the impact of different policies. Practitioners' voices must be a much louder part of the research conversation. Teacher research provides an incredibly important vehicle for allowing teachers to make real contributions to the field without necessitating them leaving the classroom. It allows for systematic and thoughtful reflection on one's practice, but also allows for teachers to share globally their *knowledge-of-practice* or the knowledge generated by teachers in their own classrooms (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

"Accidental" Teacher Research in the Quest for Expertise

J.B. Mayo, Jr. (University of Minnesota)

(LATE) INTRODUCTION TO TEACHER RESEARCH (JB MAYO)

Unlike my colleague in the previous section, my introduction to teacher research did not come in graduate school; instead, it came many years later and well into my professional career as an assistant professor. Although I had taught secondary, social studies methods courses for several years, it was only when I began to teach one of the core, doctoral-level courses, *CI 8132: Teaching and Learning Theory*, that I truly took notice of this method of research. In this particular course, I was tasked with learning more about and taking deep instructional dives into several teaching theories and methods, including teacher research. In fact, the class sessions spent focusing on teacher (action) research have led me to include youth participatory action research (YPAR) as well. Coincidentally, my new focus on teacher research took place at the same time that I truly began to embrace my dual identity as both a social studies researcher *and* a teacher educator, again, even though I had taught methods courses to pre-service teachers for several years prior.

During those years as a methods instructor, one of the lessons that stood out to students was one that focused on the use of interactive lectures and incorporated information about Two Spirit indigenous people, individuals who believe they are born with both the masculine and the feminine *spirits* in one individual body (Anguksuar, 1997; Mayo & Sheppard, 2012), as the content focus. Over the years, some students who graduated from our social studies licensure program reported that they had incorporated lessons about Two Spirit people to varying degrees of success within their secondary social studies classes. It is within this specific context that one of my former students became the accidental focus of a teacher action research opportunity.

TEACHER REFLECTION AS TEACHER RESEARCH

Bill Boegeman applied for and was accepted into our social studies education program in 2011. Unlike the vast majority of our students, Bill had already obtained a teaching license from another higher education institution in Minnesota, but had subsequently been awarded a James Madison Teaching Fellowship and wanted to work toward his MA in social studies education. Over the course of his 2-year program, Bill took some courses alongside our pre-service teachers and was subsequently introduced to Two Spirit people and the wisdom I believe they impart upon the social studies (see Sheppard & Mayo, 2013). Later, after three years of teaching in a nearby school district, Bill was given the opportunity to teach an elective course on cultural anthropology, and he wanted to incorporate lessons on Two Spirit people within the larger unit he titled, "Social Identity, Personality, and Gender."

I asked Bill: How was teaching about gender in this more nuanced way any different from teaching about race or other markers of identity that are different from your own?

In our initial email correspondence, Bill sought specific lesson plan ideas that focused on Two Spirit teaching(s). In other words, he was seeking what he perceived as my expertise on this particular subject matter. As time moved forward, however, we decided that rather than he simply incorporating ideas from my previous research, *we* would actually co-teach a multiple-day portion of a larger unit of study within his elective class. We co-planned the days that included information on Two Spirit lessons; meanwhile, we agreed that I would visit his classroom for the entire unit and use this time as both a learning opportunity and a research opportunity about how his students responded to the Two Spirit information. We both believed this research would be of particular interest given the largely conservative leanings of the residents of the school district where Bill teaches, which is located some thirty miles north and west of the Twin Cities.

Bill and I taught the unit in November 2017, and I returned to the school to conduct student interviews a few weeks later in December 2017 to record students' reflections and significant memories of the lessons that centered on Two Spirit

indigenous people. I also recorded Bill's reflections as well in what turned into a 90+ minute conversation – originally scheduled for 45 minutes – that centered on his reflections about his teaching practice(s) during that period in November and how his perception of the experience actually changed in real time. He reflected on having feelings of insecurity, mixed in with a little self-doubt and imposter syndrome as he stood in front of his students as a cis-gender, heterosexual male talking about themes like gender fluidity, nuanced gender expressions, and changing gender roles. He had wondered if his students would believe him or take him seriously given his positionality. Essentially, he began to realize that his ask for my "expertise" was not only based upon my previous research on Two Spirit people, but also because I identify as a gay man. In some way, he thought that *my* non-mainstream identities (as both gay and African American) would legitimize him as the instructor on this particular topic. But as the lessons proceeded, he realized that his normative identities did not negate his ability (and legitimacy) to teach about Two Spirit people. I posed the following question to Bill: How was teaching about gender in this more nuanced way any different from teaching about race or other markers of identity that are different from your own? (Shortly before our Two Spirit co-teaching, I had come in to observe Bill teach a lesson on race that included students' participation in a talking circle, which centered on a common reading.) Bill's response was that, "I just thought it would be so different." The daunting combination of both gender and sexuality that lessons on Two Spirit people might unearth during students' question/answer sessions and discussion was too much (initially) for this self-described progressive teacher to handle: he felt the need to call in reinforcements.

But as the daily teaching went forward, he slowly began to realize that his was an important voice to hear when teaching about Two Spirit people, and gender and sexuality more generally. The reflection afforded him as a result of our co-teaching led to a renewed confidence in what he could teach as a cis-gendered, heterosexual, white male instructor. Deep reflection on his own practice has led to changes in his thinking about what is doable in the social studies classroom, and I posit

> This act of **reflection** is a form of **action research.**

that this act of reflection is a form of action research, though it may not present in ways that are traditionally connected to this form of research.

Self-Study in Social Studies Teacher Education

Andrew L. Hostetler, Todd S. Hawley, Alicia R. Crowe

In this section of the whitepaper, we reflect on how self-study of teaching has been leveraged in our social studies teacher education programs. While Alicia's and Todd's experience predates Andy's we use the 2008 invitation Alicia and Todd extended to Andy and other graduate students as a starting point to discuss the nature of self-study as a methodology and process for inquiry that changes teaching practices. Self-study is used in our teacher education programs as one option in student teaching seminar inquiry projects. As such, self-study is a means of facilitating pre-service teacher learning. To paint a more comprehensive picture of self-study in social studies teacher education and the nature of the methodology as an inquiry process we start with a description of the nature of initiating self-study as an invitation, next we describe the social studies faculty and graduate student collaborative from 2008, and finally we describe how the 2008 collaborative led to an invitation to do self-study in the student teaching seminar.

GRADUATE STUDENT LEARNING IN SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER EDUCATION: AN INVITATION TO DO SELF-STUDY (ALICIA R. CROWE)

When I, Alicia, began at Kent State, I taught the seminar with student teaching. Our secondary education program already embraced 1) action research as fundamental to a teacher's life and career long development and 2) the idea that they should begin this work as pre-service teachers, not after they took their first position. I quickly found that my students sometimes asked questions that were more self-study than action research and I allowed them and supported them in heading down that path. However, it wasn't until I had a new colleague (Todd) join me at Kent that I had someone to expand the work with. He and I quickly began to think about what was needed in social studies and self-study.

This energy was joined with some experiences while I was teaching a course called *Issues and Trends in Social Studies Education.* I invited Todd to join the course as an observer or participant if he wanted since he would be teaching this group in the spring and he did. Not long into the course, I began to notice that one student in particular

seemed inclined towards a self-study frame of mind and I wondered if we might create a collaborative to do self-study with those new to it, with support from some experienced others (Todd and me). Together we thought, this might be very interesting and that some members from the class might thrive and enjoy engaging in self-study work. So, after much of our own talking and thinking, I send an invitation to four doctoral students in the class, one masters students, and one MAT initial licensure student. It was meant to be as open an inviting as possible. Alicia wrote:

> Todd and I have thoroughly enjoyed the fall semester course. We have become increasingly interested in how all of you as new or relatively new social studies grad students and teachers/teacher to be are experiencing grad school and how you are framing and reframing your thinking (about social studies, teaching,...) and growing (as a teacher, as a scholar,...).
>
> So, to the punchline - we would like to get together as a group and discuss the possibilities of doing a study together. We were thinking of Monday or Tuesday evening of exam week but we are unsure of your schedules for exams (Henderson's class comes to mind). When replying, if you reply all then all of us can see the thoughts
> your shared.
>
> Alicia and Todd   (A. Crowe, email, 11/19/08).

We saw a prime opportunity to support a group of young scholars and teachers in engaging in practitioner inquiry. So we scheduled our first meeting for the week of exams in December in the evening.

Five of the six joined the first night. I set the stage of what the possibilities were a possible presentation alone or together at a Castle (the international conference for self-study research) and individual or group chapters in a social studies and self-study book. We then began to explore what the process might be like, emphasizing that it was up to them to decide how and when to meet, what they needed from Todd and me, and how

they might use our time together. As we progressed, over a meal, which became an essential part of our meetings, the plan began to come together.

TRUST THE PROCESS: FACILITATING A GRADUATE STUDENT SELF-STUDY COLLABORATIVE (TODD S. HAWLEY)

After joining Kent State University in 2008, I reached out to my new colleague Alicia Crowe and asked if I could observe her graduate-level social studies course. Fortunately, she said yes. After attending the majority of the class sessions and learning more about the program and the students in it, I met with Alicia to propose the formation of a self-study collaborative. Consisting of Alicia and myself, we were joined by four graduate students – two were full-time teachers (Andy and Bryan) and two were working as graduate assistants (Katie and Mike). Together we formed a collaborative we called the A-Team. We were a loose collective who met once a month at a different member's home for dinner and discussion. Our meetings served as an extension of the work we were doing within the social studies graduate program. Individually and collectively we were exploring connections between their work as graduate students and the continued development of their varied approaches to social studies teaching and teacher education.

As the studies wrapped up and we began to present and publish our work (Hawley, 2010; Hawley, et al., 2010; Hostetler, 2010), we began to realize how the process of working within our collaborative self-study group has become a powerful space for teachers and teacher educators to improve their practice and student learning in their classrooms. Each of the participants emphasized the power of collaborative self-study research to push their thinking and ability to imagine possibilities for their research and to analyze their data and discuss their findings. In writing about their findings, each participant spoke to power of the collective to serve as a source of motivation and support. Taken together, these small studies and the larger research collective demonstrate the potential for teachers and teacher educators to develop and nurture research collectives that demonstrate and enhance their ability to engage students, to improve their sense of self as a professional and to thrive in a research community. We hope that our work can inspire others to engage in similar

STUDENT TEACHERS DOING SELF-STUDY: EXPLORATIONS OF THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND RELATIONSHIPS IN TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES (ANDREW L. HOSTETLER)

Near the end of the fall 2008 semester, I was asked to teach the spring student teaching seminar course at Kent State University. I was developing the syllabus at the same time I was engaged with faculty mentors and peer graduate students in the M.Ed. and Ph.D. programs. The potential of self-study as a form of inquiry that could change teaching practice, build teacher agency, and deepen our learning about teaching led us to developing an inquiry project for the seminar course. Given the nature of self-study we avoided writing the expectations such that it would be required but rather framed it as an option among other teacher research approaches (i.e. action research) (see Mills, 2016).

> The potential of **self-study** as a form of inquiry that could change teaching practice, build teacher agency, and deepen our learning about teaching led us to developing an inquiry project for the seminar course

Out of thirty students, six chose self-study as their methodology for the inquiry project. We relied on Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) and Samaras (2011) as supportive course readings to develop the questions, methods, process for analysis, and final written reports of their studies of their teaching. The six pre-service teachers first shared their work at a roundtable style conference for student teachers in the secondary education program that spring. The teacher candidates asked a variety of questions to guide their self-studies (see Table 1 from Hostetler et al., 2013). At the beginning of the course the difference between action research and self-study was explained in terms of the question(s) asked. Specifically, self-study was presented as focusing on the "self" with concern for the other. The seminar met four times during the first week, for 12 hours in total, and devoted time each day to discussing their inquiry project. These discussions focused on how teacher candidates could develop questions, conduct literature searches, select methods of data collection and analysis, and organize collaborative groups. Teacher candidates developed working research questions and gathered five to seven sources of literature supporting their question(s). Next, teacher candidates worked

together to develop a data collection plan and eventually an analysis plan before deciding how to write up and present their work.

The collaborative aspect of the inquiry helped to reframe candidates' experiences (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998) and understand specific problems of practice (Dinkelman, 2003). After week 1, the class met every other week and teacher candidates spent about 45 minutes of each class session in collaborative groups discussing their progress and helping each other reframe experiences. One week before the final report was due, teacher candidates participated in class roundtables to present their work to peers. Following these roundtable presentations, teacher candidates revised and submitted the final written report of their work. The teacher candidates found value in making their work public (Russell, 2004) and agreed to co-author a conference proposal for Castle 2012 (See Hostetler, et al., 2012) and eventually a journal article for *Studying Teacher Education* (See Hostetler, et al., 2013). Since this initial foray into self-study with teacher candidates we have continued to invite seminar students to self-study as a means of building agency over their own professional growth and deepening their learning of social studies teaching.

Table 1 *Self-study summaries for teacher candidates' inquiry projects*

Name	Question(s) and Focus	Data collection	Data analysis	Learning
Erin	What am I doing to enhance student awareness of the world?	Biweekly assessments of students' awareness of global issues and places Informal but intentional discussions with small groups of students and the class	Reviewed data to flesh out common themes and connections to the research question Weekly discussion with colleagues about findings and process	Students may be interested in global events and a broader definition of citizenship but may not have been introduced to the ideas I will continue to deliberately expose students to different cultures, points of view, and world events
Amanda	What can I do to improve student participation in my classroom?	Mentor teacher observations Student surveys Weekly journal entries	Reviewed data for common themes and connections to the research question Weekly discussion with colleagues about findings and process	Positively reinforce students when they participate Clearly show that all students' opinions and values are welcome Peer criticism is a fear of students Find ways to help students prepare in advance of activity expecting participation
Lauryn	How can I foster a safe and structured learning environment for my students?	Journaling Informal conversations with mentor teacher	Reviewed data across 10–12 weeks of collection for themes and connections to research question Weekly discussion with colleagues about findings and process	Building relationships Rewarding positive behavior Modeling positive behavior Maintaining consistency in procedures and rules
Trevor	How do I build a relationship with students?	Survey Teaching evaluation Weekly journal	Reviewed data for themes and unique learning experiences Weekly discussion with colleagues about findings and process	Value placed on relationships of mutual respect Involve students in the process Be available for students Have consequences that are clear to students
Erin	How am I ensuring that I am meeting the needs of multiple learning styles in my classroom?	Lesson plans Assessments Student evaluations Biweekly conversations with mentor teacher	Reviewed data for common themes and connections to the research question Weekly discussion with colleagues about findings and process Discussion with students after each unit based on student evaluations	Most of my students felt that they learned best in groups and in visual settings Differentiation and awareness of student learning preferences was important to meet the needs of students who were not group or visual learners Whether "learning styles" exist or not, students claim to have preferences
Adam	How was race being discussed in the classroom, if at all? I wanted to evaluate how my teaching style affected the grades of students in terms of race	Test scores Overall course performance Survey at the end of my experience	Reviewed data across sources and the 12 weeks for common themes developed through categorization Weekly discussion with colleagues about findings and process	Impossible to measure teacher success with test scores Experience matters It is difficult to have discussions about race in class Relationships matter

Teacher Research in Social Studies Teacher Education

Todd Dinkelman, University of Georgia

Much of recent teacher education reform discourse centers on policies and initiatives. Yet high quality teacher education does not happen in policy, but in practice, in those places in actual programs that bring together teacher educators and future teachers. Much of what happens in these places of enactment remains largely in the shadows of teacher education scholarship broadly (Clift & Brady, 2005; Zeichner & Conklin, 2005) and within social studies (Adler, 2008; Crocco & Livingston, 2017). What do we know about the ground-level engagements of teacher educators and future teachers in the various field- and university-based experiences that bring them together?

As a social studies teacher educator committed to reform visions of social studies teaching and learning, I have long held an interest the lived complexities of social studies teacher education in practice. In a collaborative self-study, I

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investigated a graduate-level social studies curriculum course I recently taught-- a face-to-face, master's level *Curriculum Planning in Social Studies Education* course. I worked with a doctoral research assistant to examine the learning experiences of six students/study participants enrolled in the course.

The framework of both the course and this self-study rested on what Parker describes as "the associationist view of democracy for curriculum deliberation" (Parker, 1996, p. 10). From this perspective, the course was designed on a model of curriculum development that positions six fundamental aims of curriculum inquiry: 1) topicality, 2) diversity, 3) deliberation, 4) mutuality, 5) participation, and 6) meaningfulness.

With this study, we wanted to learn what sense study participants made of these core curriculum ideas, and the extent to which the process of the seminar helped them to consider these fundamental aims on their own terms and as meaningful intellectual tools

for future curriculum work in social studies. We also sought to develop a research-grounded account of what happened in the course, an account cast in a richly descriptive package that honors the complex nexus of program context, instructor intention, and student learning.

The result is an insider depiction of teacher education in social studies education. The study mines "…. the potential for developing a deeper understanding of the practices of teacher education by making the tacit theories of teacher education practitioners public and explicit and by subjecting those beliefs and practices to careful study, data collection, and reflection" (Adler, 2008, p. 332-333). Our work revealed key "tensions" of enactment, as well as features of the course that proved particularly helpful towards advancing ideas about reform-oriented social studies. For example, a repeatedly used assessment protocol helped most participants come to see the six course aims together as a framework useful for curriculum decision-making.

The course met with some success in giving language to a very different form of curriculum deliberation than most participants expected when they enrolled in the course. The abstract set of six curriculum aims/ideals prompted some initial tension against the more technical, practical expectations participants brought to the course. Yet, with some exceptions, participants indicated they came to learn and to understand the value of the six-theme model of curriculum deliberation.

Beyond the outcomes of the course for students, this self-study illustrates the potential for practitioner research to foster much needed discussion about various "silences" all too characteristic of different places on the teacher education research map. What sorts of ideas about curriculum do social studies curriculum courses make available to students for use in their own subsequent curriculum deliberations? This study went beyond the syllabus and anecdotes to provide an examination of "What do we do? And why do we do it?" in social studies teacher education.

This self-study raises the profile of valuable questions central to research and practice in social studies teacher education and professional development. Does the approach featured in this course qualify it as just another in a string of easily dismissed "too much theory" courses? Can we work towards a research base on common features

of teacher education work that focuses on more than just the techniques of lesson, unit, and course planning? What evidence suggests particular approaches to teacher learning cultivate intellectual and professional commitments to inquiry as a stance? Such questions call for more widespread practitioner inquiry, a form of research that reveals insights into both the local teaching and learning challenges experienced by social studies education and broader concerns of social studies as a field.

Resources

Websites about action research, teacher research, self-study, and practitioner research

- Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN):
  http://www.esri.mmu.ac.uk/carnnew/

- The Center for Practitioner Research (CFPR): http://nlu.nl.edu/cfpr

- Self-Study Teacher Research: Improving your Practice through Collaborative Inquiry:
  http://www.sagepub.com/samaras/default.htm

- Teacher Action Research (George Mason University): https://gse.gmu.edu/research/tr

Text Resources on Practitioner Research

Altrichter, H., Feldman, A., Posch, P., & Somekh, B. (2008). *Teachers investigate their work: An introduction to action research across the professions* (2nd ed.). NY: Routledge.

Mertler, C.A. (2014). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

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