

Policy Contexts and Interpersonal Relationships: An Exploration of Teachers' Instructional and
Assessment Practices

A Dissertation

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by

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Abstract

This dissertation consists of three manuscripts that explore teachers' instructional and assessment practices across varied contexts using qualitative case study research designs. The first manuscript explores Mr. James's (pseudonym) scaffolding and instructional practices to prepare students for a whole-class discussion on immigration in the 1920s in a high school history class. The second manuscript focuses on the classroom-based assessment practices and decision-making of a 6th-grade history teacher, Mrs. Hall (pseudonym), but also considers the contextual factors that appear to influence her and her school leaders' decision-making and navigation of a changing assessment policy context. Lastly, the third manuscript investigates two beginning upper elementary mathematics teachers' (Ms. Scott and Ms. Baker; pseudonyms) access to and utilization of curricular, instructional, and relational resources. This manuscript considers two different institutional contexts and the differing, and at times challenging, relationships that appear to affect the teachers' access to resources and their exertion of their agency. Thus, from the first to the third manuscript, there is increasingly additional focus on the contextual and relational factors that seem to influence teachers' instructional and assessment practices.

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APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation, "Policy Contexts and Interpersonal Relationships: An Exploration of Teachers' Instructional and Assessment Practices," has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Dedication

To Cait and Benji—your love has been invaluable.

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Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	3
<i>Dedication</i>	5
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	6
Introduction	10
Overview of Manuscripts	10
Table 1	14
References	16
<i>Facilitating Historical Discussion: How A Secondary History Teacher Approached A Whole-Class Discussion</i>	18
Abstract	19
Introduction	20
Literature Review	21
Conceptual Framework	26
Methods.....	28
Participant and School Context.....	29
Table 1	30
Data Sources and Analysis.....	30
Table 2	32
The Unit-of-Study.....	32
Table 3	33
Findings.....	34
Discussion and Conclusion.....	43
Appendix A	47
Table 4	47
Appendix B.....	48
References	49
<i>“It’s Just a Matter of Finding the Balance”: How A Beginning History Teacher Negotiated A Shifting Assessment Policy Context</i>	53
Abstract	54
Introduction	55
Review of the Literature.....	56
Conceptual Framework	62
Methods.....	63

Table 1	65
Data Sources	65
Table 2	67
Data Analysis	68
Table 3	69
Researcher Reflexivity	70
The Unit-of-Study	71
Table 4	71
Findings	74
Discussion and Conclusion	84
References	86
Appendix A	93
Appendix B	96
Table 5	96
Appendix C	97
<i>Beginning Upper Elementary Mathematics Teachers' Utilization of Curriculum Resources and Perceived Challenges Across Their First Three Years of Teaching</i>	100
Abstract	101
Review of Literature	103
Conceptual Framework	110
Methods	114
Data Collection	116
Findings	119
Discussion	134
Conclusion	136
References	138
Appendix A	142
Table 1	142
Table 2	142
Table 3	142
Appendix B	143

Introduction and Overview of Manuscripts

Introduction

This dissertation consists of three manuscripts that investigate teachers' curricular, instructional, and assessment practices within unique contexts. The first and second manuscripts are single-teacher case studies that took place in secondary history classrooms, while the third manuscript is a multiple-case study that took place in two different upper elementary mathematics classrooms. Despite these research design and contextual differences, each manuscript is conceptually similar in that they generally focus on how teachers make curricular, instructional, and assessment decisions within their varying school environments that consist of disparate school leaders, teacher colleagues, material resources, and organizational and policy contexts. For this introduction to my dissertation, I open with a detailed overview of each manuscript. I then explain the status of each manuscript and provide a timeline that delineates a plan for the submission of each paper.

Overview of Manuscripts

Manuscript 1

This manuscript examines how an experienced secondary history teacher prepared his students for (using scaffolding strategies) and facilitated a discussion of immigration and America in the 1920s. Research indicates that whole-class discussions in secondary history classrooms rarely take place because of a lack of time to cover history material and fear of retribution from students, parents, and administrators (Evans et al., 1999). Other research has documented that secondary history teachers may feel like they do not possess the skills to prepare students for potentially heated discussions (Goldberg, 2017). This body of research clearly documents why such discussions do not take place, while also indicating that more portraits of practice in which such discussions occur are pressingly needed.

This current study investigates a rare occasion where an experienced 11th-grade United States history teacher, Mr. James (a pseudonym), enacted a discussion without any intervention or prompting on the part of the researchers. A qualitative case study design (Yin, 2018) was utilized to investigate how Mr. James approached the enactment of the discussion of immigration and the Sacco and Vanzetti trial and

ways in which he used scaffolding strategies to prepare students. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How does a secondary history teacher approach a whole-class discussion within a unit about 1920s America?
2. What types of scaffolding strategies can a secondary history teacher use to prepare students for whole-class discussion?

Regarding data sources, video-recorded classroom observations, key artifacts, and semi-structured interviews were collected and analyzed for this study. Further, we drew on concepts derived from historical discussion research (Reisman et al., 2018) and scaffolding research (van de Pol, 2010) to explore the facilitation of the discussion and the specific scaffolding moves used to support students prior to the discussion. Limitations of the Reisman et al. (2018) framework are considered in this study and ways in which the framework can be extended are presented.

Regarding my role for this manuscript, I did not participate in the collection of data. I did, however, take on the lead role in the data analysis. It is important to note that the data analyzed for this manuscript are data collected for a larger study, but not all data collected for the larger study were analyzed for the current study. During data analysis, I coded semi-structured interviews and determined emergent themes (Yin, 2018). I also examined video-recorded classroom observations and wrote various memos that documented my trajectory throughout the data analysis process. Lastly, I analyzed a number of classroom artifacts (e.g., discussion exit slips and jigsaw activity notes). All of the data were used to construct the findings of this paper. I have also taken on the role of the lead writer for this manuscript.

Manuscript 2

The second manuscript investigates the classroom-based assessment practices of one 6th-grade history teacher, Mrs. Hall (a pseudonym). We also explore her assessment decision-making that appeared to be affected by a number of school-based and external factors related to a shifting assessment policy context initiated by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) after criticisms of over-testing. In 2014, the VDOE eliminated state tests for specific grades and subject areas, including U.S. History to

1865 and U.S. History 1865 to Present, which are typically taught in 6th and 7th grade. They also enacted policy requesting school divisions to create and enact new alternative assessments. Little is known about classroom-based assessment in history classrooms (Erickson & Seixas, 2015; Torrez & Claunch-Lebsack, 2013; VanSledright, 2013, 2018), especially when policy creates changing assessment contexts where teachers and school leaders have to make specific decisions surrounding assessment use.

This qualitative case study addresses this gap in the literature by examining how Mrs. Hall made assessment decisions and negotiated the policy change. This study also investigates how school leaders (i.e., the school principal and instructional coach) made sense of the policy and seemed to influence Mrs. Hall's assessment practices. For this study, we drew on concepts derived from policy realization research (Ball, 1997; 2000; 2012; 2017), teachers as 'curriculum-instructional gatekeepers' research (Thornton, 1989; 1991; 2005), and organizational research (Weick, 2007). The following research questions frame this study:

1. How does a history teacher make sense of a new assessment policy change?
2. How does this assessment policy change seem to influence a history teacher's assessment practices?

My role for this manuscript involved spending considerable time in Mrs. Hall's school and classroom. I interviewed Mrs. Hall twice and the two school leaders once each for a total of five hours. I also observed and video-recorded an entire unit-of-study in Mrs. Hall's 6th-grade U.S. History classroom. A total of 14 hours of video-recorded classroom observations were collected. Field notes were also written while I was observing Mrs. Hall's classroom and these were later typed up for analysis. Further, I collected various examples of classroom assessment documents that Mrs. Hall gave to her students. Overall, for this manuscript, I have also taken on the role of lead writer. The second author and I have spent significant time going over the analyzed data and determining emergent themes and findings. The third author has provided critical feedback on the study's findings and on the completed manuscript as a whole.

Manuscript 3

This manuscript is different from the first two manuscripts mainly because it examines two beginning upper elementary mathematics teachers rather than secondary history teachers. This study explores two mathematics teachers' utilization of curriculum, instructional, and relational resources and the relational trust and teacher agency they established and exerted across their first three years of teaching. A number of studies (e.g., Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Kauffman et al., 2002, Valencia et al., 2006) have looked at beginning teachers and their access to instructional resources and how school leader relationships (i.e., with principals and instructional coaches) play a part in the kinds of challenges they face. This body of research, however, largely focuses on elementary reading rather than other important subject areas, such as elementary mathematics. Further, little research has looked at how district-level supports shape beginning elementary teachers' experiences with curriculum resources and how school environments may influence the challenges they face.

A qualitative multiple-case study research design was used for this study (Yin, 2018). Concepts derived from teacher agency (Biesta et al., 2015; Priestly et al., 2015) and relational trust research (Bryk & Schneider, 2002) were also utilized to explain the challenges that the teachers faced with their school principals; their relationships with their district-level mathematics instructional coaches; and their experiences, perceptions, and relationships within their respective school communities relative to their sense of agency. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What types of resources do beginning upper elementary teachers utilize and how do these resources support or inhibit their design of mathematics units and lessons?
2. How do trust relations with principals and mathematics instructional coaches seem to affect beginning teachers' use of resources during their first three years of teaching?
3. How do beginning teachers draw on their own agency and trust relations to address challenges when teaching mathematics in differing institutional settings?

Regarding my role for this paper, I took part in some of the data collection, but not all. I interviewed Ms. Baker three times and spent roughly five hours in her classroom to video-record various

mathematics lessons over a two-year time period. These video-recorded classroom observations, however, were not used in the analysis of this paper. Further, I also took part in the data analysis process along with my advisor. We worked together to determine initial codes and coded each interview conducted across the first three years of teaching for Ms. Baker and Ms. Scott. We were careful to review our individual coding processes and decided on a set of final codes that were used to code all of the interviews. Memos were written both by myself and by my advisor during this process as well. These memos describe our coding process, our initial emergent themes for both teachers, and our initial findings for the study. Overall, I have taken on the role of lead writer for this paper.

Status of Each Manuscript and Timetable

The first manuscript has not yet been submitted to a peer-reviewed journal, but will be submitted within the next few months to *The Social Studies (TSS)*. Another potential journal for the first manuscript is *The History Teacher (THT)*, which may be considered after the submission and review process with *TSS*. Further, both the second and third manuscripts have not yet been submitted to peer-reviewed journals. It is my intention, however, that both of these manuscripts will be submitted for publication to peer-reviewed journals by Summer 2021 (See Table 1 for a structured breakdown of this information). For the second manuscript, the research team will submit to *Theory & Research in Social Education (TRSE)*; for the third manuscript we are strongly considering submission to *Elementary School Journal* or *Teachers College Record*. For each of these manuscripts, we expect to submit by Summer 2021.

Table 1

Manuscript Status and Timetable

Manuscript	Title	Status	Timetable
Manuscript 1	<i>Facilitating Historical Discussion: How A Secondary History Teacher Approached A Whole-Class Discussion</i>	Will submit to <i>The Social Studies (TSS)</i>	Submit to TSS no later than May 2021
Manuscript 2	<i>"It's Just a Matter of Finding the Balance": How A History Teacher Negotiated A Shifting Assessment Policy Context</i>	Will submit to <i>Theory & Research in Social Education (TRSE)</i>	Submit to <i>TRSE</i> by Summer 2021

Manuscript	Title	Status	Timetable
Manuscript 3	<i>Beginning Upper Elementary Mathematics Teachers' Utilization of Curriculum Resources and Perceived Challenges Across Their First Three Years of Teaching</i>	Considering <i>Elementary School Journal and Teachers College Record</i>	Submit to journal during Summer 2021

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Facilitating Historical Discussion: How A Secondary History Teacher Approached A Whole-Class

Discussion

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Abstract

Whole-class discussion rarely occurs in secondary history classrooms. This qualitative case study investigates how an 11th grade United States history teacher, Mr. James (a pseudonym), prepared his students for and facilitated a discussion about immigration and the Sacco and Vanzetti trial of 1921. Conceptual elements from a model of scaffolding proposed by van de Pol et al. (2010) and the Framework for Facilitating Historical Discussions (Reisman et al., 2018) were used to further investigate Mr. James's practices. Semi-structured teacher interviews, videotaped classroom observations, and various classroom artifacts were used as data sources. Data analysis suggests that Mr. James effectively scaffolded his students prior to the discussion with a jigsaw activity that prepared students for the discussion in a number of ways. It was also clear that the jigsaw activity acted as a way to encourage students to use particular facilitation moves during the discussion.

Keywords: secondary history education, facilitation, discussion, scaffolding, case study

Introduction

A substantial body of research indicates that whole-class discussions in secondary civics and government classrooms are essential as they prepare students to become active participants in civic society, help students develop critical thinking skills, and improve student's interpersonal skills (Harwood & Hahn, 1990; Hess, 2009; Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Hess & Posselt, 2002). Whole-class discussions, however, also transpire in secondary history classrooms and are equally important in teaching students essential skills. Studies have documented that discussion in history classrooms is rare, especially discussions centered on historical understanding (Nystrand, et al., 2003; Reisman, 2015; Saye & Social Studies Inquiry Research Collaborative [SSIRC], 2013). Teachers refrain from enacting discussions in history classrooms for a number of reasons, including not enough time allotted to cover material and fear of retribution from students, parents, and administrators when the discussion topics may be deemed contentious (Evans, et al., 1999). History teachers may also feel like they do not possess the skills to facilitate a successful discussion or to teach their students the content knowledge needed to frame historical topics (Goldberg, 2017). While research documents why discussion does *not* take place, the field is missing portraits of practice in which discussion in history classrooms *does* occur.

In this paper, we offer an overview of the ways that scaffolding strategies can be used by history teachers to support students before and during whole-class discussions. We utilize an example of an experienced 11th grade United States history teacher, Mr. James (a pseudonym), to illustrate specific strategies and instructional methods that can engender conditions for successful whole-class discussion. We were able to do this by drawing on video-recorded classroom observations, key artifacts, and semi-structured interviews that were collected over the course of a unit-of-study on America in the 1920s. On the second-to-last day of the observed unit, Mr. James enacted a whole-class discussion on immigration and the Sacco and Vanzetti trial of 1921. When examining the entire unit-of-study, it was clear that Mr. James enacted particular scaffolding strategies that supported his students to take control of the bulk of the facilitation moves that occurred during the discussion.

Literature Review

Teaching and Learning in History: Defining Discussion

Research identifies discussion in history classrooms as an effective pedagogical strategy for deliberating a wide range of historical topics (Reisman, 2015; Reisman et al., 2018). Various researchers have defined discussion in history and what this pedagogical approach means for teachers and students alike. Nearly 40 years ago, Dearden (1981) defined a discussion in history as a rational dispute, where contrary but logical views can be held about a historical question. Okolo et al. (2007) defined discussion in history classrooms as when “teachers can monitor students’ understanding, correct errors and misconceptions, and scaffold students’ performance” (p. 154). In a recent study about discussion in history classrooms, Reisman et al. (2018) also defined such discussions as “those activities in which the teachers and all the students negotiate historical questions or controversies using each other’s ideas and historical texts as resources” (p. 279). In other words, discussion in history classrooms includes deliberation over cogent historical disagreements where the teacher supports all students by providing a clear direction and simultaneously corrects misinformation to arrive at a shared understanding.

The purpose and quality of discussion in history classrooms is also important to synthesize. Discussion in history classrooms has multiple purposes: (1) it can construct collective knowledge for students and teachers; (2) it can support students to practice listening, speaking, and engendering historical interpretation; and (3) teachers and students can work together to “contribute orally, listen actively, and respond to and learn from others’ contributions” (Reisman et al., 2018, p. 279). It has also been argued that quality discussion in history classrooms is centered on rationality, which is the main link to the discipline of history (Foster, 2013; Goldberg & Savenije, 2018). Quality discussion in history classrooms can also be thought of as an endeavor that is grounded in structured questions where more than one answer is deliberated over (Goldberg & Savenije, 2018). This is a similar conceptualization of discussion in civics and government classrooms, where students are expected to engender an opinion, talk over opposing views, and aim to persuade each other to establish a common understanding (Hess &

McAvoy, 2015). Much of the work that has identified quality discussion in history classrooms has focused on what the teacher and students are doing and communicating while discussion takes place.

Research on Discussion in History Classrooms

Numerous studies have shown that the enactment of discussion in history classrooms is rare (Nystrand et al., 2003; Reisman, 2015; Saye & Social Studies Inquiry Research Collaborative [SSIRC], 2013). In a study by Reisman (2015), 7,000 minutes of classroom observation footage were recorded and, of that time, only 132 minutes were devoted to whole-class discussion of a given historical topic. This limited observation footage of discussion in history classrooms is not surprising. Goldberg and Savenije (2018) have indicated that teachers refrain from enacting discussions for numerous reasons, including that teachers may feel inadequately prepared to contain the controversial nature of some issues and that putting together materials for a quality discussion is an arduous and time-consuming task. The rarity of discussions in history and teachers' disinclination for enacting such discussions begs the question: Why pursue a rare, difficult to structure, and potentially inflammatory pedagogical approach to teach history?

Research has shown (e.g., Abu-Hamdan & Khader, 2014; Bu, 2015; Carrico, 2014; Foster, 2013; Johnson & Johnson, 1988) that the ways in which teachers structure discussions can set up students to successfully understand multiple perspectives, moral lessons, and the contextual elements of past issues. Foster (2013) proposed a seven-step approach for composing materials and activities for teaching history through discussion. First, teachers should choose a topic based on their teaching context, specifically considering the degree to which their community will allow such a discussion to take place. Second, teachers should determine a focal question that students can take a stance on. The third and fourth phases ask teachers to instruct their students on background knowledge and introduce them to contrasting pieces of evidence related to the historical issue. The fifth phase consists of students evaluating the evidence and categorizing their analyses relative to the stance that they are taking. The sixth phase asks students to prepare their argument based on their analysis of the provided evidence and, finally, the last phase is the whole-class discussion.

Goldberg and Savenije (2018) noted that Foster's (2013) seven-step approach to discussion in history is quite different from Hess's (2009) townhall style of teaching controversial social issues in civics and government classrooms. One main difference is that Foster's (2013) approach could leave students undecided about the issue at hand, while Hess's (2009) method is based on working toward a shared understanding of the policy being discussed. Foster's (2013) approach is not the only way to structure discussion in secondary history, as other researchers have considered different methods that teachers can utilize to achieve specific educational aims. Carrico (2014) specifically looked at the role of the teacher during discussions in history and argued that a "pedagogy of disengagement" should be modeled to distance one's self from the discussion, divulge their personal connection with the issue, and identify ways to transcend the historical issue. Further, Johnson and Johnson (1988) found that the Structured Academic Controversy (SAC) approach lessened disrespect for the other. During a SAC, students work in opposing dyads and are expected to repeat the opponents' arguments before they disclose their own arguments. The intention here is for students to come to a sort of reciprocal understanding, which was shown to reduce potential inflammatory rhetoric and engender a robust discussion of ideas.

Further research has found that effective discussion in history classrooms is centered on the role of the teacher as a facilitator (Kohlmeier, 2006; Reisman, 2015; Reisman, 2018; Journell, 2008). Kohlmeier (2006) found that the way in which teachers act as facilitator during a discussion can be important for prompting students, indicating misconceptions, and steering clear of presentism and unfounded assumptions. Further, in a study about asynchronous discussion in an online history class, Journell (2008) indicated the important role the history teacher takes on in facilitating student-to-student sharing, establishing links philosophies and values, and confronting unsubstantiated comments. In a recent intervention study, Reisman et al. (2018) developed The Framework for Facilitating Historical Discussions, which focuses on history teachers making facilitation moves, such as engaging students as sense-makers, orienting students to the discipline, orienting students to each other, and orienting students to a shared text (Reisman et al., 2018). These outlined concepts can position history teachers to facilitate

better discipline-specific discussions, particularly when students may encounter the historical problem space, where “the strangeness of the past butts up against the human desire to render it familiar” (Reisman, 2015, p. 5). Teachers who follow the components of the framework can support students in entering this problem space while simultaneously avoiding presentism (Reisman et al., 2018)—where students focus on modern historical events and overlook contextualizing these events to construct historical knowledge (Reisman, 2015). Overall, these studies indicate what successful discussion moves look like, but also point to questions about what is still needed to better understand the complexities of discussion in the history classroom. Reisman (2015) offers a suggestion for what is needed by simply asking: “What instructional scaffolds best prepare and support students to engage in such discussions” (p. 38)? This paper sheds light on potential scaffolding strategies that can support both teachers and students to take on successful discussion moves.

Defining Scaffolding

In the most basic sense, scaffolding exemplifies high quality support that is tailor-made to students’ needs (van de Pol et al., 2010). For decades, the act of scaffolding has largely been understood as a way for teachers to move a student toward their potential understanding (Wood et al., 1976). The scaffolding literature also indicates differing types of scaffolding support that are key for teachers to use to promote student success in learning new tasks. These types of support include contingent, faded, and transfer of responsibility (van de Pol, 2010). Contingent scaffolding is “often referred to as responsiveness, tailored, adjusted, differentiated, titrated, or calibrated support,” where “the teacher’s support must be adapted to the current level of the student’s performance” (van de Pol et al., 2010, p. 275). Fading is the progressive withdrawal of a certain scaffolding strategy enacted by the teacher (van de Pol et al., 2010). Lastly, transfer of responsibility is when the teacher gradually entrusts all responsibility of a given task to the student and where the student eventually takes complete control of learning (van de Pol et al., 2010). Overall, scaffolding strategies can look different depending on the teacher’s educational aims and learning objectives and may look quite different when students are learning historical topics

through varied instructional methods, such as reading documents and texts, using technology to assist the learning of social problems, or when facilitating a whole-class discussion.

Research on Scaffolding in History Classrooms

Little attention has been paid to how teachers can provide high-quality scaffolding support to students who work in groups and prepare for whole-class discussions in history classrooms. However, there is a small, but important, body of research that has investigated scaffolding in history classrooms. In Graves and Avery's (1997) study, they explained the difficulties of teaching reading in secondary history and offered a framework called The Scaffolded Reading Experience (SRE). This framework provides a number of strategies for improving students' reading of historical documents and texts. The SRE framework suggests a spectrum of extensive and much less extensive ways to support students in their reading endeavors. Exploring the teaching of history in a different way, Brush and Saye's (2002) study examined the use of scaffolding when students are confronted with problem-based social studies. The authors also investigated if scaffolding could be useful when teachers must manage students' cognitive challenges engendered by the presentation of ill-structured social problems. A key finding in Brush and Saye's (2002) study is that embedded, or planned ahead, scaffolding may be best used, rather than spontaneous scaffolds, when teachers take students through their reasoning process when posed an ill-structured social problem.

Reisman (2015) also provides a glimpse at the potential use of scaffolds to support historical discussion in the moment when they observed a teacher halt a whole-class discussion because they realized students were confused about the shared text. The teacher stopped the discussion, adopted an Initiate-Response-Evaluate (IRE) discourse pattern, and effectively outlined how they expected students to approach the text and what constituted the basic historical facts that might help them interpret the text. Writing about this situation, Reisman (2015) states: "The entire sequence functioned as a scaffolded for student understanding both of this particular document and of the disciplinary demands placed on students as they tentatively venture into the historical problem space" (p. 35). Overall, these studies outline ways in which scaffolding strategies can enhance student learning in the history classroom. But,

few studies have investigated the scaffolding strategies that support students before historical discussion transpires. This paper uncovers ways in which teachers can scaffold students for successful whole-discussion and provides examples of preplanned instructional scaffolds that support students in the complex skills required for such discussion.

Conceptual Framework

We grounded our work in literature on quality historical discussion (Reisman et al., 2018) and scaffolding (van de Pol et al., 2010). Reisman et al.'s (2018) framework for the facilitation of historical discussion consists of four main components that describe how history teachers can facilitate successful whole-class discussions. These components include engaging students as sense-makers, orienting students to each other, orienting students to the text, and orienting students to the discipline of history. Reisman et al. (2018) found that when teachers utilized these specific components during a discussion that historical discussions improved. It is important to note that Reisman et al. (2018) indicate that the framework components of engaging students as sense-makers, orienting students to the text, and orienting students to each other may translate to classroom discussions in other social studies subjects, such as civics, geography, and economics. It is the component of orienting students to the disciplinary of history, however, that the authors advise may not translate. For the framework to work, it would be crucial to determine a "problem space" for each discipline (Reisman et al., 2018). For example, in history classrooms the "problem space" is where students are "confronted with the tension between their contemporary values and worldviews and those held by historical actors" (Reisman, 2015; Wineburg, 1991). The "problem space" in other social studies disciplines may look drastically different. Thus, this framework is particularly unique and suitable for examining discussion in history classrooms.

We also frame our work with van de Pol's (2010) conceptual model of scaffolding. In a number of ways, preparation for and the facilitation of historical discussion is closely related to the conceptual model's three types of scaffolding support—contingency, fading, and transfer of responsibility. First, contingency is clearly related to the facilitation of discussion in history classrooms when facilitating a successful discussion is grounded in employing talking moves at particular times to adapt to students'

performance (Reisman et al., 2018). For example, if students give isolated answers that do not build off of other students' responses, the teacher may choose to orient students to each other by asking basic questions (e.g., "What do we think about Will's arguments about why the shared texts' thesis is inadequate?"). These types of simple questions can orient students to each other and support students in coming to a shared understanding, but only when the teacher is aware of student performance in the moment.

Second, fading (van de Pol et al., 2010) is also an important facet of successful discussion in history classrooms. Relative to the Reisman et al. (2018) framework, teachers may find they can enact fading when students implement facilitation moves during the discussion. Teachers may find it useful to employ facilitation moves in the beginning of a class discussion, perhaps engaging students as sense-makers to get them thinking about the shared text's thesis, to move the conversation to focus on particular evidence and claims. Lastly, transfer of responsibility can also be observed in a successful historical discussion. For example, a teacher may limit their facilitation moves due to the prior use of scaffolding strategies and other instructional methods that showed students what to do to move a discussion along. It could be the case that a teacher focuses on teaching a series of tasks, or in this case facilitation moves, so that they can observe student performance and only enact a few moves when needed but allows the students to take control of their learning.

It is also vital to consider how history teachers may use scaffolding strategies to prepare students before historical discussion takes place in the classroom. For example, a history teacher may utilize various scaffolded activities to assess the knowledge and skills of students at a given moment to more effectively use contingent scaffolding (van de Pol et al., 2010) to adapt future assessments to best support students before the impending discussion. In addition, a history teacher may create an activity that is centered on fading scaffolding (van de Pol et al., 2010) where students practice particular skills, such as weighing evidence and making sense of a text's thesis, so that when the time comes for the historical discussion they are prepared to employ such techniques that have been found to be successful facilitation moves (Reisman et al, 2018). Lastly, a history teacher may use instructional methods for students to

practice with informal discussions that are centered on making sense of a text or video so that when the historical discussion takes place the students will be able to assume a full transfer of responsibility where they take control of their sensemaking and learning (Reisman et al, 2018; van de Pol et al., 2010).

Methods

This study used data derived from a larger qualitative study that explored how students' secondary history classroom experiences (grades 5-12) relate to their learning of new knowledge and skills. In this larger study, a total of five secondary social studies teachers participated. These teachers taught various subjects within the social studies, including U.S. History to 1865, U.S. History 1865 to Present, World History & Geography to 1500, World History & Geography 1500 to Present, VA/U.S. History, AP European History, AP U.S. History, AP World History, and AP Economics. All of the teachers taught in different public middle and high schools located within Virginia. After contacting the five teachers to determine one unit suitable for observation, teachers were interviewed about their background, pedagogical approaches, and intended learning outcomes. After the first interview, the teachers' unit was video-recorded and they were interviewed once more after the unit was completed. Additional classroom artifacts and documents were also collected during this study, including student exit tickets, document-based questions (DBQs), and various other texts. It is important to note that the students were also interviewed about their experiences completing the DBQs during the unit, but this was not a main focus for this study.

A qualitative case study design (Yin, 2018) was utilized to investigate how Mr. James (a pseudonym) approached and facilitated an end-of-unit whole-class discussion. A case study design allows the opportunity to comprehensively investigate the rare occurrence of a whole-class discussion in a history classroom. Further, this research design also supports a thorough examination of how Mr. James prepared his students for the discussion and supported them in making sense of the discussion after its conclusion. Thus, this study explores the following research question:

1. How does a secondary history teacher approach a whole-class discussion within a unit about 1920s America?

2. What types of scaffolding strategies can a secondary history teacher use to prepare students for whole-class discussion?

Participant and School Context

In 2017, when the larger study data was collected, Mr. James had been teaching for approximately 30 years at the secondary level and was observed teaching a dual-enrollment U.S. History 11th grade class. Mr. James was selected for the larger study because he was teaching the 1920s in a dual-enrollment history class at the same time as another teacher who was teaching the 1920s in a traditional 11th grade U.S. history class that was solely being tested with a Standards of Learning (SOL) exam. Differences between these two contexts were examined further in the larger study. It was never the intention of the larger study to specifically observe Mr. James for how he facilitated discussion. It just so happened that he chose to include a discussion near the end of the unit on the 1920s, which was video-recorded.

Mr. James was a White male who was teaching in a large public high and was teaching various history classes on a daily basis (see Table 1 below for more information). The public high school that Mr. James taught in served grades 9th through 12th. Regarding school demographics, roughly 62 percent of students identified as White, 15 percent of students identified as Black, 10 percent of students identified as Hispanic, and 7 percent of students identified as Asian. Other students who identified as two or more races and as American Indian or Alaska Native make up roughly 5 percent, while Hawaiian Native or Pacific Islander students made up less than 2 percent. At the time of the study, the public high school was made up of nearly 2,000 students. Mr. James's U.S. History class that was observed for this study matched closely with these demographic data with White students making up closer to 70 percent of the students. In total, roughly 23 students were in Mr. James's class during the four classroom observations.

Table 1***Participant Information***

Pseudonym	Demographics	Years Teaching	Classes Taught	Educational Background
Mr. James	White male	~30	11 th grade U.S. History, Dual-Enrollment	- BA: History - MA: History - Other teaching credentials

Regarding informed consent, each participant involved in the larger study was asked to sign an approved IRB Informed Consent form. The protection of these participants was strictly followed according to the IRB protocol. In addition, the teacher of focus has been given a pseudonym to fully protect his identity. It is also important to note that all data collected was considered to be anonymous data to ensure confidentiality and the proper storage practices were enacted to safeguard from unintended disclosure.

Data Sources and Analysis

Semi-structured Interviews

In the larger study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both the teacher and his students. For this study, only the teacher interviews were used and consisted of a pre- and post-interview, which took place approximately one week before and one to two weeks after the unit-of-study took place. The teacher interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. This data, once collected, was uploaded to a software program for specifically analyzing qualitative data, including audio-recorded interviews. Manual coding was used, however, rather than the software program to determine patterns and themes in the interview data. This analytical strategy is described in more detail below.

Teacher Semi-structured Interview Protocols

Mr. James was interviewed twice—once before the unit of study was observed and once after the unit was completed. The pre-unit interview questions were used to better understand various aspects about the teacher and the upcoming unit of study, including the main goals and timing of the unit, how he

would describe his teaching style, and how long he had been teaching U.S. history. (e.g., “How would you describe your teaching style?”, “How long have you been teaching U.S. History?”). The pre-unit interview lasted for 30 minutes, while the post-unit interview lasted for 60 minutes. The post-unit interview consisted of questions that inquired about how he thought the unit went and why he chose to use particular instructional approaches (e.g., “How did the unit go?” and “Why did you choose these instructional approaches?”). See Appendix B for the semi-structured teacher interview protocols.

Classroom Observations and Classroom Artifacts

Four classroom observations were videotaped and transcribed to further understand how Mr. James approached and facilitated the discussion. Overall, 360 minutes of video data were analyzed for this study. Comprehensive field notes were also taken when the videos were reviewed, which consisted of detailed summaries of Mr. James’s use of instructional methods and facilitation of the discussion. Specific classroom artifacts were also collected and analyzed to determine how Mr. James utilized these materials when he approached the discussion. These classroom artifacts included various shared texts, student notes, DBQ essays, and other lesson materials.

Analytic Strategies

Both thematic and pattern coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) were utilized to analyze the semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and classroom artifacts. In addition, sub-coding was used to support the primary codes to provide a better understanding of the particular qualities and interrelationships that arose (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The primary codes of “sense-making,” “one another,” “shared text,” and “discipline” were specifically used to analyze the jigsaw activity and the transcribed discussion. Further, sub-codes were also utilized to identify whether a student or the teacher utilized one of the components. For example, if a student asked a critical thinking question about content already learned, I coded this as “sense-maker” (primary code) and “student” (sub-code). The intention of coding in this manner was to determine (1) how many times the students and teacher enacted key facilitation moves and (2) to ascertain how successful the discussion was based on the frameworks four components. In addition, the discussion transcript was coded using in vivo codes derived from the post-

interview with Mr. James regarding his goals for successful discussion. These codes were used to determine the extent to which students focused on summarizing and explaining the key points of the shared text, evaluating and determining an overall thesis for the shared text, and relating the content of the shared text with current events.

Table 2

Initial and Final Codes

Initial Codes	Final Codes
Sense-making	Sense-making
One Another	One Another
Shared text	Shared text
Discipline	Discipline
	Sub-Codes: Teacher or Student

Further, analytic memos were used to synthesize the data into higher-level analytic interpretations (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). These memos were constructed to determine the topics of this study's research question, emergent patterns, categories, themes, and concepts, as well as the potential connections among these patterns, categories, themes, and concepts. These memos provided a foundation for understanding the single, bounded context of this within-case analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

The Unit-of-Study

Mr. James's unit on America in the 1920s lasted for four total classes. Three classes took place before the spring break, while one class took place after the break. Each class lasted roughly 90 minutes each. Mr. James acknowledged in the pre-unit interview that he intended to build the unit around an old DBQ essay from 1986 that in years past he gave his former Advanced Placement students (Pre-interview). Although the DBQ essay was the main focus of the unit for Mr. James, he also expressed how important

the discussion was for students to verbalize particular unit themes and to connect with the shared text—a chapter entitled “Sacco and Vanzetti” in *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection*.

Mr. James based the unit on a number of themes (see Table 3 below) that he expected students to grapple with across the entirety of the unit. He intended to set up the unit as a “confrontation” between the two themes of “modernism” and “traditionalism” (Pre-interview). Mr. James also stressed in the pre- and post-interviews the importance for his students to understand the distinction between “modern urbanites” and “traditionalists” who mostly lived in the rural parts of 1920s America and how they struggled with “progressivism.” He also wanted his students to understand the theme of “conflict” and the “causes of tension” that existed during the 1920s. He intended for students to identify immigration as a major cause of tension during the discussion and for them to use the shared texts to come to a shared understanding about the Sacco and Vanzetti trial.

Table 3

Summary of Unit

Day	Content	Instructional Methods	Themes
Day 1	- Progressivism - Expansion to Imperialism - World War I	- Lecture - Informal Discussion - Jigsaw Activity	- Conflict - Tension - Modernism/Traditionalism
Day 2	- World War I - Election of 1920 - Spanish Influenza	- Lecture - Informal Discussion - Continuation of Jigsaw Activity	- Conflict - Tension - Modernism/Traditionalism
Day 3 <i>Discussion Day</i>	- The “Roaring?” Twenties - Immigration - The Sacco & Vanzetti Trial	- Lecture - Informal Discussion - Discussion	- Conflict - Immigration - Tension - Modernism/Traditionalism
Day 4	- 1920s to Great Depression - Gender, Family, & Education - Cultures in Conflict	- Lecture - Informal Discussion	- Conflict - Immigration - Tension - Modernism/Traditionalism

Mr. James also had three specific goals for the unit. First, and as mentioned, Mr. James wanted his students to engage with specific “causes of tension.” During class lectures, he intended for his students to record these tensions in their notes, later write about them in their DBQ essays, and deliberate over them in the discussion. Second, Mr. James set the goal for his students to use the analytical skills that he had been teaching them throughout the year to examine the textbook and secondary readings (see Table 4 in Appendix A for a description of the secondary readings). He expressed that if his students could successfully use their skills along with the provided readings that they would improve their DBQ essays and partake in a more robust discussion. Lastly, Mr. James utilized various scaffolding and instructional methods to assist students in making connections between the past and present. These methods included having students read various shared texts, taking lecture notes, participating in informal class discussions and a jigsaw activity, and writing the DBQ essay. The end-of-unit whole-class discussion took place on the second-to-last-day of the unit and took roughly 30 minutes to complete. In total, 14 students took part in the discussion. The central question of the discussion was as follows: “Was it fair for Sacco and Vanzetti to have been tried and convicted?”

Findings

It became apparent that successful teacher facilitation of discussion does not always have to happen during discussion, but rather can occur before the discussion takes place. During the two classes before the discussion, Mr. James utilized a jigsaw activity to support students in asking critical questions, getting them to build off of one another’s statements, analyzing various texts, and emphasizing how history is constructed through various forms of evidence. The jigsaw activity was successful in engaging and orienting students to such a degree that it made sense for Mr. James to rarely use facilitation moves during the discussion. In other words, the jigsaw activity offered a number of opportunities for Mr. James to scaffold students’ learning. During the discussion, students frequently engaged one another about the content of the shared text, built off of one another’s ideas, critically examined the thesis of the shared text, and deliberated how the story of the Sacco and Vanzetti trial was constructed. These findings raise

questions about the role and the intention of history teachers both before and during discussion takes place.

Scaffolding Before the Discussion: The Jigsaw Activity

In the two classes before the discussion took place, Mr. James assigned his students to partake in a 30-minute jigsaw activity. He described this activity and the other instructional methods he used throughout the unit as “padding” or “training wheels” for students to prepare them how to analyze evidence. He further described the jigsaw activity as a way to address important questions that they would need to consider during the discussion and in their DBQ essays. Three groups of students were assigned a secondary reading from *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection* by James Davidson and Mark Lytle and were asked to read it and determine its thesis before the day of the activity. On the first day of the activity, the students gathered into three pre-delegated groups and were asked to make sense of their assigned reading. The students asked each other a range of questions (e.g., What do you think the author is arguing here? What did you think about what the police said about Sacco and Vanzetti? Is the author’s argument related to modernism and traditionalism?) and attempted to determine the key points of the reading. Throughout this activity it was clear that students engaged each other as sense-makers and consistently oriented themselves to the text (Observation, Class 2). The students utilized their questioning and evidence from the text to develop a thesis to share out to the larger class. The jigsaw activity supported the students by providing ample opportunities to practice these skills before the discussion took place.

Students were also tasked with determining which member of the group would share out the group’s consensus to the larger class—Mr. James referred to these students as the “leaders” (Observation, Class 2). When one group finished sharing, the other groups were given an opportunity to ask clarifying questions, but students rarely took advantage. Mr. James, however, asked frequent questions, which was observed to be the first step of contingent scaffolding—where the educator can use instructional methods, like questioning, to get students to think about how they can use such questions to support their learning in future activities (e.g., the discussion). In the following example, a student from the first group shared

their thoughts regarding an increase of race riots in America during the 1920s, but Mr. James engaged this student with clarifying questions to make better sense of what the student was conveying:

Student 2 (Group 1): Okay. Um, we had *The Tribal Twenties* by John Highman and it talked about after World War I, how xenophobic and anti-immigrant rhetoric really ramped up and the causes of that. Um, this included the Red Scare when the Russians became communists. Also, there was an economic downturn when immigrants started coming to the U.S., so the blame shifted towards them. During this time, the KKK saw an uptick in membership and race riots against immigrants also increased.

Mr. James: Race riots against immigrants or against blacks?

Student 2 (Group 1): Oh, uh. There is one example in the text in Illinois where the riot targeted the Italian immigrants in the town.

Mr. James: So, how do you call that a race riot?

Student 2 (Group 1): Um...

Mr. James: I agree with you! I think you're right—I just want to know why attacking Italians is considered a race riot?

Student 2 (Group 1): Because people believed that anything other than Anglo-Saxon, Protestant was a different race. They believed being Catholic was a different race. Italians were also considered a different race. (*Mr. James gives the student a thumbs up*) (Observation, Class 2)

By asking these questions, Mr. James effectively engaged his students as sense-makers and oriented them to the text. He asked questions about content that they were already familiar with, but pushed them to verbalize exactly why that content was important to understand within the context of 1920s America and modeled how they should be questioning the text and content. It was clear that students asked these types of questions during the discussion as well and matched how Mr. James scaffolded students' learning during the jigsaw activity. In other words, the way in which Mr. James utilized the jigsaw activity aligned with what he called the "skills of classroom discussion" (Pre-interview) and was simply practice for the

“formally graded” discussion (Pre-interview). Overall, the jigsaw acted as a space where students engaged one another as sense-makers, oriented themselves to each other, and oriented themselves to the text. Mr. James was able to use the group work as a way to scaffold students to rely less on him for making sense of the text but rather manage their own learning. There were clear moments where he offered students support with a range of questions; but, for the most part, he provided an opportunity using the jigsaw activity to make sense of the historical information on their own and with peers.

The Structure and Purpose of the Discussion

Mr. James structured the discussion similarly to the well-known pedagogical approach called “fishbowl.” A “fishbowl” discussion is traditionally set up so that students are seated in two circles. The inner circle includes the students that are discussing the shared text and central question, while the outer circle consists of students expected to observe, take notes, and later comment on how well the discussion transpired (Gall & Gillett, 1980). The discussion took place on the second-to-last day of the unit and took roughly 30-minutes to complete. In the post-unit interview, Mr. James was clear with the purpose behind using discussion in his history class:

...they have to summarize the article and then they go through and discuss the key main points the author is trying to make, then they try to reach group consensus about what’s the overall purpose of the article, and what’s the overall thesis. Then, when they get to the evaluation part of it, it’s thinking, what did you think about the article? Why? How can you relate it to today’s time? And also, what relevance does this have to the [DBQ essay] that you’re working on? And some of them discuss that. Some groups discuss that and some groups really dance around it and ignore it. But, you know, that’s what I want them to do. (Post-interview)

Mr. James wanted his students to move beyond mere summarization of the shared text. He indicated that the discussion should focus on critiquing the shared text, relating the content of the shared text to students’ knowledge of current events, and developing a shared understanding. Further, Mr. James stressed that students should deliberate over how the main topic of the discussion related to their DBQ essay—the main assessment of the unit. As the discussion transpired, it was most evident that Mr. James

directed his students with questions to relate the shared text about the Sacco and Vanzetti trial to recent historical and current events. This was also evident in the jigsaw activity and was observed as a form of contingent and fading scaffolding.

The discussion transpired in a noticeably structured manner. It first started with students' summarization of the shared text. Then students began to explain the key points that the authors outlined in the text. After that, one student engaged her peers in discussing the overall thesis of the text. Starting at that point, students began relating the content of the text to current and more recent historical events. While students heavily focused on these events during this time in the discussion, a few students still made sure to focus on what the overall thesis was and the discussion ended with three students offering their evaluation of the text.

Facilitation During the Discussion

Students As Sense-makers

Students engaged one another as sense-makers a total of three different times. One student in particular engaged her peers twice, which pushed her peers to consider the overall purpose and thesis of the shared text. In the passage provided below, the student asks her peers specific critical thinking questions about the complex context of those people at the time who wanted to either prosecute or protect the two Italian immigrants involved in the Sacco and Vanzetti trial:

Student 3 (female): Well, why do you think...what do you guys all think about why this became such a huge deal? Because there were people in that society who were...who didn't want them to die and who wanted to protect them. I'm sure they didn't know all the facts of the case, but I'm sure they knew the type of people that they were and knew something about their beliefs. So, why do you think these people tried to protect them? (Observation, Class 3)

Two students responded to her questions with thoughtful points, including that some people wanted to protect Vanzetti because he was "acting magnanimous" and that "he was trying to act like a martyr" (Observation, Class 3). In addition, another student responded with points about how people at the time

did not know that Sacco and Vanzetti possessed bombs and were potentially going to use them; thus, making it seem like Sacco and Vanzetti were “innocent men who were seen as saints” and worth protecting (Observation, Class 3).

Further, near the end of the discussion, the same student who asked the critical thinking questions also engaged her peers to make sense of the shared text’s thesis:

Student 3 (female): So, to establish a thesis, you guys kind of think that it was along the lines of the bias in the legal system, they were easily able to fall prey to that? Bias is kind of our thesis? (Observation, Class 3)

These questions prompted students to think about what they were deliberating during the discussion based on the thesis of the shared text. This also stimulated discussion surrounding current events—a key element of what Mr. James wanted his students to do during the discussion.

It is also important to note that this student was deliberately asking these questions to bring students into the discussion and to establish a consensus around a thesis. Mr. James had students fill out a self-evaluation form at the end of the discussion that asked two, open-ended questions: (1) “What key points did you add to the discussion?” and (2) “What did you do to help with the process of the discussion (any leadership?)” (Self-Evaluation Form, Class 3). For the second question, the student wrote: “Brought [student name] into the discussion a few times as well as [student name] and I helped move the group on to the thesis and evaluation” (Self-Evaluation Form 1, Class 3). This form and the student’s response were clear indications that Mr. James had been teaching his students what he expected of them during the discussion and that the students were well-aware what their roles should be to cultivate a successful discussion.

Also, although Mr. James was reserved with his facilitation moves, he engaged students as sense-makers two times at the very end of the discussion. These moments both consisted of Mr. James asking particular students to explain what they thought about the shared text, essentially recapping the content that they were already familiar with. Overall, Mr. James rarely engaged students as sense-makers, but it

makes sense that he did not have to when other students readily engaged one another and that he had prepared his students with specific expectations.

Orienting Students to Each Other

The orientation of students to each other was frequently observed throughout the historical discussion. In total, there were 10 times where students recognized the previous students' response by acknowledging them by name or stating "going off of that" or "building on that" (Observation, Class 3). Each time this occurred, the students effectively built off of the previous statement, which established a more robust understanding of the shared text. The following example indicates a moment where "Student 4" adds on to a short but important point made by "Student 12":

Student 12 (male): [Sacco and Vanzetti] were asked about their political beliefs when they were questioned as well.

Student 4 (male): Going off of that...like, when they got arrested they asked what they were arrested for and all the police officer said was: "You're being suspicious characters." And for two people who don't speak English very well...they didn't know what was going on. So, they did act kind of suspicious because they were carrying guns and they lied about what they were doing beforehand and they also thought they were being deported. It was all very confusing for them since they didn't know what they were arrested for.

(Observation, Class 3)

Within the context of the discussion, "Student 12" made an important point—Sacco and Vanzetti were questioned about their political beliefs at the time of their arrest and "Student 4" built upon that statement to provide further details about why the act of questioning was concerning. This was a consistent pattern for students, where one student made a simple but vital point about the trial and another student deepened the point with additional information from the shared text.

It is also important to note that it makes sense that students frequently oriented to each other because Mr. James started the discussion by prompting his students to consider the following:

Mr. James: Okay! With a group this size it's a little more problematic, but you need to still get in two comments and you need to let other people talk. Be patient and build off of other people's ideas as always. (Observation, Class 3)

Mr. James reported that he wanted his students to build off of one another's ideas. About one-minute into the discussion, Mr. James interjected after a student gave a summary of the shared text and said "I might ask someone to add to that" (Observation, Class 3). Without hesitation the student that had provided the summary seconds before said: "Do you guys want to add to that" (Observation, Class 3)? The student clearly knew that it was an expectation to build off of one another's ideas, so he quickly modeled Mr. James's call to add onto the summary. Two more students added on to the first students' summary and a stronger summarization of the shared text was cultivated.

Further, the self-evaluation form that students filled out at the end of the discussion asked students about how they helped with the "process of the discussion" (Self-Evaluation Form, Class 3). One student wrote in response to this question: "I was the supreme leader—I led everything, transitioned, stated my points, and built off of others" (Self-Evaluation Form 2, Class 3). The other collected self-evaluation forms also noted whether they "built off of others" or brought other peers into the discussion (Self-Evaluation Form 2, Class 3). It was a clear expectation that Mr. James wanted his students to work together and build upon each other's ideas and the students successfully did just that throughout the discussion. The self-evaluation form was clear example of how Mr. James scaffolded students to acquire more autonomy during the discussion.

Orienting Students to the Text

During the discussion, students oriented themselves to the text eight different times. The first reference to the shared text was within the first minute of the discussion and was centered on building off of two other students' shared text summaries:

Student 3 (female): Also, for the summary, a big part of the article was how important this case turned out to be although on the surface you didn't think it would get the attention...the

international attention that it did. So, this article talked about why this was such a big deal and how. (Observation, Class 3)

This was a consistent pattern that was observed in the first minute of the discussion all the way to the final two minutes of the 30-minute discussion.

Another important orientation to the text that was motivated by a student involved the consideration of historians' perspectives regarding the Sacco and Vanzetti trial:

Student (male): For this I said...the article brought in historians' perspectives that were different because the judge only took certain evidence directly related to the case and historians can look at the mindset of the people of the time and the context of the events of the time. (Observation, Class 3)

Not only was this a powerful idea for the students to contemplate because of its focus on the discipline of history, but it was an additional example of how important it was that students oriented each other to the shared text—it pushed them to build onto their summaries of the shared text, but to also consider how history is constructed.

Mr. James regularly focused on unpacking the secondary texts that he provided in his U.S. history class, especially during the jigsaw activity. Thus, it makes sense that he would encourage his students to regularly refer to the shared text to frame the discussion as well. There was only one time, however, where Mr. James asked students to consider the text to add to the discussion—this particular moment happened in the last two minutes of the discussion. Overall, Mr. James did not need to frequently orient students to the text. His students consistently oriented one another and considered the overall purpose of the shared text, its thesis, and how the authors of the text used evidence to construct the past.

Orienting Students to the Discipline

Students made references to the discipline of history and how historical perspectives are constructed seven times during the discussion. The first example of students orienting themselves to the discipline involved a student who considered how the shared text, which focused on historians' construction of the Sacco and Vanzetti trial, described how eye witness accounts were a critical part for

the prosecution (Observation, Class 3). The student explained that the authors of the shared text provided different perspectives on the eye witness accounts, which have informed current historians' understandings of what actually occurred regarding Sacco and Vanzetti.

In addition, there was another student who explained that the shared text described a historian who was writing a book about Sacco and Vanzetti and how that historian's research has changed historical perspectives regarding the two Italian immigrants and their anarchist intentions. The student claimed the following:

Student 12 (male): The one thing to note though is that at the end of the article there is that guy who is writing a book about Sacco and Vanzetti and all the research that he did and he found that, even though they didn't commit this crime...that they most likely didn't, they still weren't, like, good people in general. They had made bombs that they were planning on using and they were willing to die for their cause. So, they ended up dying for something else, but they were willing to cause pain to other people. So, yeah. This was obviously corrupted stuff and they weren't great people. (Observation, Class 3)

This consideration of historians' different perspectives based on varying evidence is aligned with how history is constructed, but this idea was also stressed by Mr. James after the discussion ended when he offered his thesis of the shared text to the class. According to Mr. James, one of the main goals of the discussion was for students to consider and deliberate how historians use evidence to construct the past, which students successfully carried out.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings from this study suggest that successful teacher facilitation of discussion does not always occur during the discussion, but rather can transpire before it takes place. Enactment of additional instructional activities, such as a jigsaw can support students in engaging them with content and orienting them to make successful discussion moves. Scaffolding students can offer autonomy and space to practice analytical and evaluative skills, which can support other classroom endeavors, such as a successful whole-class discussion. These are important findings for a number of reasons. First, they provide a picture of

how students can become the discussion facilitators, rather than the teacher. This aligns with previous research and sheds light on the potential for teachers to not only learn how to facilitate successful discussions themselves, but how to use instructional activities centered on entrusting autonomy to students prior to discussions. Foster (2013) offered a seven-step approach for composing materials and activities for teaching history through discussion. The third and fourth steps consist of teachers instructing their students on background knowledge and introducing them to evidence related to the historical issue and question at-hand. Our current study indicates one way to instruct and scaffold students to enhance their historical understanding prior to a discussion. Further, the fifth stage of the Foster (2013) approach includes teaching students how to evaluate evidence and categorize analyses regarding the stance they plan to take for the discussion. Mr. James was able to use the jigsaw activity as a means to support students in this endeavor. This also raises questions about additional strategies beyond the jigsaw activity that can be used by history teachers to prepare students to evaluate, compare, and contrast evidence.

When students are able to practice the skills of evaluation and comparison of evidence before the discussion takes place, they may be able to more effectively employ facilitation moves during the discussion. By doing so, a “pedagogy of disengagement” may become more feasible that Carrico (2014) demonstrated as an effective measure for teachers to distance themselves from the discussion and allow for more student autonomy. We do not mean, however, to argue that teachers should be completely removed from the discussion, as we observed Mr. James’s scaffolding and facilitation moves to be a vital factor in students’ readiness to partake in the discussion. Our findings align with previous research from Kohlmeier (2006) that indicates that teachers can act as facilitators during discussion by prompting students, identifying misconceptions, and steering students away from presentism and unfounded assumptions about the past. Mr. James interjected only a few times, but times that what we considered vital moments when the discussion was veering away from the main question. During the jigsaw activity, he also guided students to stay on topic and to both ask and answer essential questions.

Reisman (2015) contends that research needs to further explore the instructional scaffolds that best prepare students to engage in whole-class discussion. In addition, Brush and Saye (2002)

demonstrated that embedded, or planned ahead, scaffolding strategies may be best to support students with discussions centered on ill-structured social problems. We argue that such planned ahead scaffolding strategies are key in supporting students with discussion, especially when the discussions are centered on potentially controversial topics, such as immigration. Our findings raise other questions about when facilitation should and needs to take place for successful discussion in history classrooms. The historical discussion framework put forth by Reisman and colleagues (2018) offers specific moves that can make discussion more successful in the moment. But our study also demonstrates one potential instructional activity that can support facilitation of discussion prior to it occurring. Perhaps the framework could take on additional components that suggest how teachers can support the students to adopt such facilitation moves and additional best practices (e.g., a jigsaw activity centered on secondary readings) that can give students time to practice before entering the discussion. In other words, rather than utilizing the framework as only a tool for teachers to improve their skills, perhaps the framework could be viewed as a continuum where teachers, students, and best practices simultaneously exist. Teachers could then use the framework to determine how to best prepare their students to effectively engage and orient one another during discussion.

Additional research is needed to explore circumstances where discussion takes place in history classrooms. Further, more research is needed to explore other instructional activities that may best support students in enhancing their skills and knowledge to prep them for discussion. Given the current political context in the United States and the findings of prior research (e.g., Evans, et al., 1999; Goldberg, 2017), teachers are overwhelmed with the societal, community, and institutional expectations they must navigate when it comes to discussion in history and civics classrooms. Determining instructional activities that can better prepare students before discussion takes place could sway teachers to include more discussion in their classrooms—particularly, discussion that is centered on students’ analytical and evaluative skills. Perhaps then, teachers may feel more inclined to lead successful discussions and teach their students the content knowledge needed to frame historical topics. With more teachers utilizing discussion in their history classrooms, it gives educational researchers more opportunities to investigate ways in which we

can enhance such discussions that teach us about the past, the present, and, ultimately, how we should live together.

Appendix A

Table 4

Descriptions of Secondary Readings

Text Name and Author	What is the text about?	Main Topics Covered	How was this text used by the teacher?
<i>The Tribal Twenties</i> by John Highman	Introduces topics like nativism, “flowering of racism,” the KKK, the Jewish people in America, and anti-Klan groups that clashed with the KKK.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nativism • Racism • KKK • Jewish Americans • Anti-KKK groups 	Used for informal class discussions to identify and deliberate over “causes of tension” during the 1920s. Also, used in the jigsaw activity.
<i>The Shame of the Babbitts</i> by Eric F. Goldman	Introduces the influence of the 1920s era presidents (i.e., Harding, Coolidge, Hoover), the concepts of socialism, communism, and progressivism, and the economics of the 1920s.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1920s presidents • Progressivism • Communism • Socialism • Economics • Who made money and why? 	Used for informal class discussions to identify and deliberate over “causes of tension” during the 1920s. Also, used in the jigsaw activity.
“Sacco and Vanzetti” in <i>After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection</i> by James Davidson and Mark Lytle	Introduces and analyzes the case of Sacco and Vanzetti, accused of committing a payroll robbery of the Slater and Morrill Shoe Company in South Braintree, Massachusetts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Question of Legal Evidence • Beyond Guilt or Innocence • A Nation Stirred 	Used as the primary shared text for the discussion, which took place at the end of the unit.
<i>Who Was Roaring in the Twenties?—Origins of the Great Depression</i> by Robert S. McElvaine	Introduces an in-depth view of the economics of the 1920s that led to the crash of the economy in 1929.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who benefitted and why? • Foreign lending • Excess of resources yet high rate of both poverty and hunger. 	Used for informal class discussions to identify and deliberate over “causes of tension” during the 1920s. Also, used in the jigsaw activity.
“The 1920s” in <i>Consensus and Conflict in American History</i> by Allen Davis and Harold Woodman	Introduces, in three pages, an overview of the 1920s as a distinctive decade in U.S. history.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paradoxes and contradictions (i.e., isolationism but with huge overseas investments, increased wealth and prosperity for upper class and an economic collapse). 	Used for informal class discussions to identify and deliberate over “causes of tension” during the 1920s.

Appendix B

Teacher Interview Protocol

Pre-Unit Interview Questions

1. **What is the unit that you'll be teaching and how long will you spend teaching the unit?**
2. **How would you describe your main objectives/goals for this upcoming unit-of-study?**
3. **Can you explain the DBQ assessment for this unit?**
4. **How would you describe your teaching style?**
5. **How long have you been teaching U.S. History?**
 - a. At all levels (e.g., AP, dual-enrollment, etc.)?

Teacher Interview Protocol

Post-Unit Interview Questions

1. **How did the unit go?**
2. **Why did you choose these instructional approaches?**
3. **Did you meet your learning targets? How do you know?**
4. **What's your approach to writing a DBQ?**
 - a. What did you want to students write about?
 - b. How did you want them to approach that?
5. **How did the students do on the DBQ?**
6. **Talk through the test (what's the right answer, why is the right answer, point to when the students would have learned it)?**
7. **Let's talk through the assessment data. What jumps out at you? How do you think students learned [identify topics]?**

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**“It’s Just a Matter of Finding the Balance”: How A Beginning History Teacher Negotiated A
Shifting Assessment Policy Context**

Tyler Woodward, Michael Gurlea, and Stephanie van Hover

Abstract

Little is known about teachers' assessment decision-making in secondary history classrooms. This qualitative case study investigates how a 6th grade United States history teacher, Mrs. Hall (a pseudonym), and her school leaders made decisions regarding classroom-based assessment and navigated a shifting assessment policy context. Conceptual elements from policy realization research (Ball, 1997; 2000; 2012; 2017), teacher as gatekeeper research (Thornton, 1989; 1991; 2001; 2005), and organizational research (Weick, 2007) were used to further investigate the policy contexts and Mrs. Hall's and her school leaders' decision-making. Policy and news documents, semi-structured interviews, videotaped classroom observations, and various classroom artifacts were used in this study. Data analysis suggests that Mrs. Hall enacted a unit-of-study that included a variety of assessments and her assessment decisions appeared to be influenced by a number of factors including the school and department culture, her teaching philosophy, the input of administration and instructional coaches, and both the current and previous assessment policy contexts. Mrs. Hall navigated this complex policy context by adopting what she termed as a "balanced approach" to assessment.

Keywords: secondary history education, classroom-based assessment, policy, case study

Introduction

In their 2014 book, *Visible Learning and the Science of How We Learn*, Hattie and Yates observed that learning is a theme “too absent from discussions about schooling. Instead, the focus of the discussion is too often about teaching; this is not to say that teaching is unimportant, but the purpose of teaching surely relates to learning” (p. xii). Yet, as the title of their book suggests, learning is often invisible; measuring and understanding what students learn is a complex endeavor. The most common way teachers try to appraise student learning is through assessment practices. But, while the field of history education is replete in research that explores whether or how teachers enact best practices related to ambitious teaching (Fogo, 2014; Grant, 2003; Monte-Sano, 2008) little is known about the day-to-day assessment practices of history teachers. Assessment practices encapsulate what teachers do to gather, analyze, and utilize information about student learning assembled before, during, or after instruction. The articulated purpose of assessment is to support teachers in gaining insight into student learning *and* to make data-based decisions about enhancing students’ learning in history classrooms. As Torrez & Claunch-Lebsack (2013) observe, there is “a paucity of empirical research focusing specifically on assessment in the social studies classroom” (p. 462).

Much is known state-level, high-stakes standards-based assessment and how they impact teaching and learning social studies (Au, 2007; Grant, 2006; van Hover, Hicks, & Sayeski, 2012; van Hover, Hicks & Washington, 2011; Yeager & Davis, 2005), and this research clearly indicates that context matters. And while teaching moves (and some associated assessment practices) have been explored in a high-stakes testing context, little research explores classroom-based, teacher-created assessment. That is, little work in history explores, at the classroom level, teachers’ diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment and the thinking, or decision-making, informing those decisions. Each of these assessment types can inform teachers about students’ prior knowledge (i.e., diagnostic assessment); can direct student learning and the instructional practices of teachers (i.e., formative assessment); and, can report student learning to teachers, school administrators, parents, and other outside audiences typically for “highly consequential purposes” like “promotion/retention decisions, certification, or selection” (i.e., summative

assessment; Bonner, 2013, p. 90). Assessment is a key aspect in supporting teachers' instructional practices and decision-making and can have meaningful consequences for student learning. Gareis and Grant (2015) indicate that knowing "what to teach and how to teach it" requires a discernment of "the degree to which students have learned at any given point in time" (p. 3). If social studies teachers are to enhance their understanding of their students' learning then assessment must become an integral piece along with their curriculum and instruction. This is especially the case when changing assessment policy contexts mandate teachers and school leaders to develop and enact new assessments for the history classroom.

This current qualitative case study investigates one 6th-grade history teacher, Mrs. Hall (pseudonym), over the course of a unit on the Five English Colonies. Mrs. Hall's context was of interest because the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) had eliminated three high-stakes Standards of Learning (SOL) tests in history courses due to criticisms of over-testing, including Grade 3 History and US History to 1865 and US History 1865 to Present, which are typically taught in grades 6 and 7. Thus, Mrs. Hall and her school division, administration, and teacher colleagues were no longer expected to test 6th-grade history students, but were rather called to develop and enact local alternative assessments to replace the traditional SOL test. We first collected policy documents and new sources to trace the path of this changing assessment policy in Virginia. We then interviewed Mrs. Hall, observed a unit-of-study to determine her assessment use, collected classroom artifacts, and interviewed her school principal and instructional coach. The observations, interviews, and classroom artifacts were utilized to explore how Mrs. Hall and her school leaders made sense of the assessment policy change and how she made decisions regarding her day-to-day classroom-based assessment practices.

Review of the Literature

An Overview of Assessment

Assessment can be defined as a broad approach to an array of evaluative tasks teachers use to quantify and qualify student learning and may be diagnostic, formative, or summative. The main purpose of diagnostic assessment is to gauge pre-knowledge, while the purpose of formative assessment is to

direct and enhance student learning and the instructional practices of teachers (Shepard, 2006). The purpose of summative assessment is “to use inferences to report student learning to one or more audiences outside the classroom, such as parents and school administrators, often for highly consequential purposes such as promotion/retention decisions, certification, or selection” (Bonner, 2013, p. 90). High-stakes tests can be considered a summative assessment that is a single sample of a student’s knowledge or skill (Cizek, 2009).

Within the context of Virginia, school divisions have been asked to develop local alternative assessments to replace the traditional, standardized SOL tests. The local alternative assessments can take the form of a “performance assessment” (“Performance Assessments,” 2019), or an assessment that “measures subject-matter proficiency, requires students to apply the content and skills they have learned, and should present opportunities for students to demonstrate acquisition of the ‘Five C’s’ – critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration and citizenship” (“Performance Assessments,” 2019). The research literature indicates that performance assessments can be thought of as evaluations of mastery that “emulate that context or conditions in which the intended knowledge or skills are actually applied” (American Educational Research Association [AERA], American Psychological Association [APA], & National Council on Measurement in Education [NCME], 1999, p. 137). They can also take various forms, such as presentations, written products, and demonstrations (see Table 5 in Appendix A for more assessment definitions).

Further, performance assessments have historically been deemed by policy makers as vital tools in educational reform (Linn, 1993) for three main reasons (Lane, 2013). First, they allow students to demonstrate meaningful learning targets that are difficult to measure with other assessment formats (Resnick & Resnick, 1992). Second, they act as examples of tasks that support learning rather than as mere indicators of learning (Bennett, 2010; Bennett & Gitomer, 2009). Third, they support instructional practices by showing teachers what is vital for students to learn (Lane, 2010). Lane (2013) also states that the qualities of performance assessments make them “ideal tools for formative, interim, and summative assessments that can be naturally embedded in instruction” (p. 313). Little social studies education

research has examined performance assessment in history classrooms. Given the Virginia assessment policy context and the VDOE's call for the development and enactment of alternative and performance assessment, more research is needed regarding how such contexts may influence history teachers' decision-making and use of classroom-based assessment.

Classroom-based Assessment

Research has shown that classroom-based assessment directly influences student learning (McMillan, 2013). Classroom-based assessment can be defined as the collection, evaluation, and utilization of information assembled before, during, and after instruction to support teachers in making decisions on cultivating students' learning (McMillan, 2013). This is different from large-scale or standardized tests in that classroom-based assessment connects "learning targets directly to assessment practices that lead to the improvement of students' learning through progress monitoring based on the information collected by the classroom teacher (McMillan, 2013, p. 432). Across a number of subject-areas, classroom-based assessment has been rarely empirically researched. However, there are a few examples of classroom-based assessment in mathematics, science, writing, and special education research that demonstrate the importance of such assessment.

Research about classroom-based assessment in mathematics has shown that secondary mathematics teachers tend to use a variety of on-going formative assessments, such as "math journals, flexible grouping, pre-assessment quizzes, performance tasks, and questioning" (Suurtamm, et al., 2010, p. 450). Other research on this topic has shown these findings to be consistent (e.g., Panizzon & Pegg, 2007; Sato et al., 2008). Research on summative classroom-based assessment in mathematics has not been researched as often as formative assessment, but mostly focuses on assessment and grading practices and frequency (McGatha & Bush, 2013). Research on classroom-based assessment in science has shown that teachers' formative assessment practices appear to be connected to assessment requirements, teachers' planning, the kind of data collected based on the assessment tasks, and the timing of teacher feedback (Ruiz-Primo, 2011). Within this body of literature, there is also evidence of the usefulness of performance assessment, particularly looking at the development and enactment of portfolios (Duschl &

Gitomer, 1997), the collection of evidence from formative interactions (Cowie, Moreland, Jones, & Otrrel-Cass, 2008), and the utilization of online performance assessments (e.g., Hickey, Ingram-Goble, & Jameson, 2009; Ketelhut, Nelson, Clarke, & Dede, 2010).

Compared to mathematics and science, the classroom-based assessment literature on writing and special education is quite limited. Research on assessment of writing is greatly needed, especially compared to the more robust work done on writing assessment (Parr, 2013). The utilization of on-going classroom-based assessment creates opportunities to assess students' writing. Parr (2013) suggests that interactive and planned formative assessment, progression tools, and detailed scoring rubrics can be effectively used for communicative purposes and to potentially enhance writing achievement. Regarding classroom-based assessment in special education, Salvia et al. (2007) indicates that the existing literature is limited, while Xu (2013) calls for more case study examples of how classroom-based assessment is used by teachers and the ways in which it can be utilized to support students with special needs.

Classroom-based Assessment in the Social Studies Classroom

Since the federal passage of *No Child Left Behind of 2001* (NCLB), research on assessment in the social studies classroom has largely investigated high-stakes assessment policy contexts (Grant & Salinas, 2008; Grant, 2017; Shemilt, 2018) and has clearly demonstrated the ways that assessment drives teachers' instruction (Au, 2007, 2009; VanSledright, 2013). For example, high-stakes, multiple-choice tests have been shown to be overly focused on factual recall of historical information (VanSledright, 2013; 2018) at the same time compelling teachers to narrow their curriculum and instruction (Au, 2007; Fitzpatrick et al., 2018; Barton & Levstik, 2004; Grant & Salinas, 2008). Recent research, however, has called for a substantial policy shift to the enactment of teacher-designed assessments (Reich, 2018) and performance assessments (Gareis, 2019). *The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015* (ESSA) has also encouraged a transition away from the high-stakes era of NCLB and to alternative assessments that may take the form of "portfolios, projects or extended performance tasks" (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2016). The transition to alternative assessments is also reflected in substantial projects and initiatives, like the *College, Career,*

and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013) and Stanford University's *Beyond the Bubble* project (Breakstone et al., 2013).

In a review of classroom-based assessment in social studies classrooms, Torrez and Claunch-Lebsack (2013) simply note: "The existing literature is rife with studies on assessment, testing, and evaluation, yet there is a scarcity of empirical research focusing specifically on assessment in the social studies classroom" (p. 560). The research that does exist on this topic has demonstrated that assessments can inform both students and teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 1993; Levstik & Barton, 2011; NCSS, 2004); that the purpose of assessment should be to enhance the learning process (Shepard, 2001); that assessments should varied and on-going (Stiggins, 1991; Wiggins, 1998); and, that assessments should be consistent with overarching social studies goals and comprise authentic activities (Hart, 1999; NCSS, 2011). Further, this research suggests that performance assessment, grounded in historical thinking skills, can increase student proficiency when compared to more traditional multiple-choice-based assessment (Smith et al., 2019); that social studies teachers may enact performance assessments in ways that deviate from school district requirements (Fitzpatrick et al., 2018); and that social studies teachers' professional experience, political capital, and the institutional contexts in which they work may influence how and to what extent they argue for alternatives to standardized test-preparatory assessments (Meuwissen, 2013).

In a recent validity study, Smith et al. (2019) reported that History Assessments of Thinking (HATs), regarded as "short, constructed-response assessments of historical thinking," were more effective at increasing student proficiency in historical thinking compared to multiple-choice questions (p. 118). Further, the authors noted that the multiple-choice questions, as a means to assess, did not demonstrate students' historical thinking proficiency. This was deemed to be the case because the format of the multiple-choice questions did not provide the opportunity for students to include written information about their thinking. Smith et al. (2019) intended for the HATs to "meet the need for assessments of complex disciplinary processes in history" (p. 136). This research suggests that utilizing assessment grounded in authentic disciplinary thinking, such as historical thinking, can help teachers construct high-quality history assessments.

Using a qualitative case study research design, Fitzpatrick et al. (2018) reported that one social studies teacher enacted a performance assessment in ways that deviated from the school division's intent. The authors indicated that the performance assessment was grounded in historical thinking and was considered a document-based question writing assessment (DBQ). Based on analyzing interview data, Fitzpatrick et al. (2018) recognized a clear pattern indicating that the teacher, Mr. Smith, was frustrated by the school division's requirement to administer the DBQ assessment to his students. Mr. Smith claimed that he wanted to alter the documents associated with the DBQ and make it his own. In the end, Mr. Smith was not allowed to modify any part of the performance-based assessment. This case study raises questions about how teachers respond to expectations relative to assessment policy. In the case of Mr. Smith, he became frustrated by the regulative demands of the division and adapted his instructional methods to emphasize the SOL-like test. More research in this vein is needed to examine how assessment policy expectations are associated with teachers' assessment decision-making.

Other research suggests that social studies teachers' professional experience, political capital, and the institutional contexts in which they work may influence how they argue for alternatives to standardized test-preparatory assessment (Meuwissen, 2013). A main finding of Meuwissen's (2013) case study is that institutional demands can influence teachers' assessment practice, especially if they are working in schools where assessment is bureaucratized. This matches Grant and Salinas's (2008) call for researchers to consider the influence of teachers' institutional contexts as they reconcile assessment policies and practices. It is also important to note that this case study included two teachers, one novice (Noah) and one experienced (Elizabeth), who taught 10th grade government within the same school district, but in different high schools. Meuwissen (2013) claims that "the relatively low poverty rates and high graduation rates in Noah's and Elizabeth's schools evince stable settings, largely unencumbered by threats of state oversight or reconstitution" (p. 308). More empirical research needs to investigate how varying institutional and policy contexts influence teachers' experiences and decision-making. In addition, more research needs to recognize situations in which districts and school leaders regulate and seem to affect teachers' assessment expectations and decision-making.

Conceptual Framework

We ground our study in concepts derived from policy realization research (Ball, 1997; 2000; 2012; 2017) teachers as ‘curriculum-instructional gatekeepers’ research (Thornton, 1989; 1991; 2001), and organizational research (Weick, 2007). Ball’s (1997) conception of policy realization that makes sense of the convoluted nature of policy implementation and, for this study, frames our exploration of the changing assessment policy context. Ball (2017) contends that policies are neither neutral nor static and that the path of a policy is a localized and context-based process that is “ongoing, interactional, and unstable” (p. 10). Policy realization also distinguishes the “socially and politically constructed nature” of schooling (Ball & Goodson, 1984, p. 3) and makes clear that within institutions, “policies do not normally tell you what to do; they create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do is narrowed or changed or particular goals or outcomes are set” (Ball, 1997, p. 270). Consequently, teachers must take on “creative social action” and partake in decision-making when new policy contexts emerge (Ball, 1997, p. 270).

The concept of teacher as curricular-instructional gatekeeper (Thornton, 1989; 1991; 2005) considers teachers decision-making. According to Thornton (2005), gatekeeping “encompasses the decisions teachers make about curriculum and instruction and the criteria they use to make those decisions” (p. 1). Gareis and Grant (2015), however, indicate that “curriculum and instruction alone represent an incomplete model of teaching and learning in the classroom” and that assessment “is integral to decisions that classroom teachers must make about both instruction and curriculum” (p. 3). Curriculum and instruction are imperative to teachers’ decision making (Thornton, 1989; 1991; 2005), but assessment is a missing, and much needed, piece of the curriculum and instruction model (Gareis & Grant, 2015) as well as the concept of teacher as curricular-instructional gatekeeper. We drew on the concept of gatekeeping to investigate the ways in which Mrs. Hall made decisions regarding her assessment use.

We also drew on organizational research by Weick (2007), which argues that, to attain success, individuals may need to ‘drop the tools’ that make up their identity. Weick (2007) drew on the story of firemen who refused to drop their tools as they attempted to flee deadly canyon brush fires to emphasize

that when tangible tools (e.g., chainsaws, axes, hoses, etc.) are a necessary part of your identity, you may struggle to know when or how to drop them, especially if they have “little familiarity with the alternative” (p. 7). In the case of this current study, the old tools that teachers and school leaders may be averse to dropping include the SOL tests, the testing data derived from such tests, and the common instructional practice of teaching to the test. Overall, we used each of these theoretical concepts to understand the convoluted realization of the traditional and new assessment policy contexts in Virginia, the ways in which Mrs. Hall made decisions regarding assessment, and to determine which tools (both old and new) Mrs. Hall and her school leaders felt comfortable holding onto or dropping within the shifting assessment policy context.

Methods

We used a case study methodology (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013) to investigate the decision-making of one teacher, Mrs. Hall, and the unique instructional and assessment changes she made based on the new assessment policy. The case study methodology was also important to utilize when we interviewed the school principal, Mr. Simon (pseudonym), and school instructional coach, Mr. Brooks (pseudonym) to determine their roles as school leaders and as instructional and assessment contact points for Mrs. Hall. Regarding data collection, we spent considerable time observing Mrs. Hall’s classroom, collecting artifacts, and interviewing Mrs. Hall and her respective school leaders. By doing so, we triangulated a number of data sources to investigate a shift in assessment policy and Mrs. Hall’s decision-making and assessment practices. Thus, this study explores the following research questions:

1. How does a history teacher make sense of a new assessment policy change?
2. How does this assessment policy change seem to influence a history teacher’s assessment practices and decision-making?

Setting and Participants

Setting

Sanders Middle School (pseudonym) is located in central Virginia in a rural community. The school has approximately 425 students, grades 6 through 8. Out of the total number of students, 350

identified as White (82.35%), 41 students identified as Black (9.65%), 14 students identified as Hispanic (3.29%), and 20 identified as multi-racial (4.71%). Overall, 227 students identified as male (53.41%) and 198 identified as female (46.59%). Mrs. Hall's first block 6th grade class consisted of nine students—one Black male student, five White male students, and three White female students. Sanders Middle School has a recent history of struggling with high-stakes test scores and was once deemed a “failing” school by the VDOE. As a result, school leaders have emphasized raising and maintaining higher test scores in reading and mathematics. (See Table 1 in Appendix C for information about this school).

Teacher Participant

At the time of the study, Mrs. Hall was a first-year teacher who identified as White and female. She was selected for this study based on various criteria. First, Mrs. Hall was a current full-time social studies educator. Second, we selected Mrs. Hall because she was teaching 6th grade U.S. History; which, for Mrs. Hall's school division, was a subject-area that no longer comprised an end-of-course high-stakes test. Lastly, Mrs. Hall was teaching in a school division that exists in a county that is typically under-resourced. We were interested in exploring how a shifting assessment policy context might look like in such a school division.

She obtained an associate's degree and worked in other jobs before obtaining her bachelor's degree in politics and history. She continued working for a year after she obtained her bachelor's before she began scouting for teaching jobs. She described her path to the classroom as a “non-traditional journey” and indicated she was not “your typical first-year teacher” (Pre-unit Interview). Overall, she felt confident in how she was managing her first-year in the classroom with few challenging moments.

School Leader Participants

Two school leaders (i.e., the school principal and instructional coach) were interviewed for this study. The school principal, Mr. Simon, was interviewed for 60 minutes and the school instructional coach, Mr. Brooks, who was previously a teacher in the social studies department for nine years, was interviewed for 50 minutes. Each school leader identified as a White male and had served in their respective positions for a number of years (please see Table 1 below). Both the school principal and the

instructional coach had been in their current roles for four years each. Based on the interview data, each school leader was seen as staple members of the school community and were heavily involved in determining how the school would handle the new shift in assessment policy.

Table 1

Study Participants

Role/Participant Name	Gender	Race	Teaching Background	Years of Experience in Current Role
6 th Grade Teacher/Mrs. Hall	Female	White	Taught secondary history for 1 year	~1 year
Principal/Mr. Simon	Male	White	Taught secondary history for nine years	4 years
Instructional Coach/Mr. Brooks	Male	White	Taught secondary history for nine years	4 years

Data Sources

The data sources for this study include collected documents, pre- and post-unit semi-structured interviews, video-recorded classroom observations, field notes, and classroom artifacts. Data collection included three phases. In the first phase, we conducted a pre-unit interview to confirm Mrs. Hall's participation and to identify a unit-of-study to observe. In the second phase, we video-recorded the unit-of-study, took detailed field notes, and collected classroom artifacts. Lastly, we conducted a post-unit interview with Mrs. Hall. The three phases of data collection made it possible to iteratively make sense of Mrs. Hall's beliefs about assessment, observe her instruction and assessment usage during class time, and to decipher her reflections on the unit-of-study.

Policy Documents and News Sources

We systematically collected local, state, and federal policy and news documents to trace the inception, dissemination, and enactment of the new assessment policy. We also collected presentation materials from conferences and workshops. The policy documents and conference materials were

obtained on the VDOE website, including PowerPoints that were presented at VDOE conferences, official memos written by the Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction, and other VDOE-approved documents that outline school divisions' adoption of performance and balanced assessment. News articles were procured through national, regional, and local news organizations' digital archives. The news sources comprised The Washington Post, The News Virginian, The Richmond-Times Dispatch, The Daily Progress, Orange County Review, Roanoke Times, and the Greene County Record. Search terms used to find these news sources included, 'Education,' 'Assessment,' 'Local Alternative Assessment,' 'Testing,' 'SOL Test'/'Standards of Learning', 'Performance'/'Performance-Based,' and other iterations of these terms.

Pre- and Post-unit Semi-structured Teacher Interviews

We conducted a pre-unit semi-structured interview with Mrs. Hall a week and a half before we observed the unit-of-study. This interview consisted of questions about her teaching background and philosophy, her general beliefs about assessment, and how she typically used assessment in her 6th grade US History to 1865 class. Additional questions were asked to determine an appropriate unit to observe for the current study. After observing the unit-of-study, we conducted another interview with Mrs. Hall. This post-unit interview included questions about her thoughts on how well the unit went, what she thought about the assessments she used, and various other topics, such as how she is evaluated as a teacher and her beliefs about the VDOE's attempt at changing how U.S. History to 1865 is assessed (please see the full interview protocol in Appendix A). Mrs. Hall agreed to both interviews and completed a consent form. The first author audio-recorded and transcribed each interview, which lasted for an hour each for a total of 2 hours of interview data.

Post-unit Semi-structured School Leader Interviews

The school leader interview protocols consisted of questions that were similar to the teacher interview protocols (please see the school leader interview protocols in Appendix C). For example, we asked each school leader about whether or not incentives and/or consequences were attached to teacher

evaluation, if their beliefs about assessment matched those of Mrs. Hall, and if the school and history department environments culturally supported the new policy shift.

Video-recorded Classroom Observations and Field Notes

Eleven classroom observations were video-recorded in Mrs. Hall's classroom. In total, 14 hours of video data were collected and analyzed for this study. Comprehensive field notes were also taken by the first author when each day of the unit was video-recorded. These field notes consisted of detailed summaries of Mrs. Hall's use of instructional methods and her enactment of varying assessments. After writing out the field notes by-hand, the first author typed them up for the analysis process and were also used to ask additional questions in Mrs. Hall's post-unit interview.

Classroom Artifacts

The classroom artifacts (e.g., assessments given to students; please see Table 2 below) were collected and examined to determine the types of assessments that Mrs. Hall gave, how they fit within the unit-of-study, and their classification type (e.g., project, performance task, multiple-choice quiz or test, etc.). A range of assessment types were collected, including formative, summative, and an example of a formative performance task.

Table 2

Assessment Documents Collected During Unit 4

Day	Documents Collected	Type of Assessment
Day 2	- "CSI Investigation: What happened to the Lost Colony?" packet	Formative performance task
Day 3	- "Comparing the Early American Colonies" worksheet - Gallery walk documents outlining different characteristics for each of the three colonial regions	Formative
Day 8	- French & Indian War PowerPoint and notes worksheet	Formative
Day 10	- 25-question multiple-choice unit test	Summative

Data Analysis

Document analysis comprised the collection of local, state, and federal policy documents, news sources, and presentation materials from VDOE conferences and workshops. Beginning with documents published in 2014, the first and second authors determined emergent themes through holistic coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) and created a timeline to determine the origins of the policy shift and trace it to the present. The timeline made it possible to triangulate this information with the participant semi-structured interviews. All three researchers met to analytically review the emergent themes from the document analysis that were then written in narrative form by the second author.

The semi-structured interview data for all study participants (i.e., Mrs. Hall, Mr. Simon, and Mr. Brooks) were coded in two major stages (Saldaña, 2015). The first stage comprised the application of holistic codes to data chunks. The first author identified the descriptive codes during the first stage of the interview data (please see Table 3 below). The first author then created a matrix that broke down each holistic code with its respective data chunks. Next, the second author reviewed the matrix of holistic codes and read through each interview to determine additional codes. After this, the first and second author met, reviewed each interview, and compiled a list of holistic codes and sub-codes for all interviews. For the second stage of coding, we separately read the interviews with the list of holistic codes and sub-codes and appropriately applied each code (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). We met to go over our coding to determine emergent themes and review disconfirming evidence. We thoroughly discussed any situations where we did not agree on the application of a code in order to come to an agreement.

The first author reviewed all of the video-recorded classroom observation and field notes data to determine how Mrs. Hall utilized assessment across the unit-of-study. The observation data was used to confirm the field notes data regarding her use of assessment. Further, the video-recorded observations were used to transcribe the specific moments at which Mrs. Hall enacted assessments. These transcriptions were typed up and used to capture the ways in which she described and delivered her diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments. The document, semi-structured interview, field notes,

and classroom observation data were triangulated to confirm potential findings (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). We determined that each data source largely substantiated each other. When we identified disconfirming data, we worked as a research team to interrogate its relationship with our potential findings. We actively looked for rival explanations (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) to reduce our biases and to better support our findings.

Table 3***First and Second Stage Coding Cycles for Interview Data***

Interview Coding	
First Stage	Second Stage
Teacher Background	Teacher Background
Teaching Style	Teaching Philosophy
Perceptions About Assessment	Perceptions About Assessment
Examples of Performance-based Activities	Use of Assessment
Professional Development	Observed Unit
The Assessment Transition Within the School	Teacher Evaluation
Current Use of Assessment	Balanced Approach
Philosophy of Teaching	School Leaders and Assessment
Perceptions of the Observed Unit	
Perceptions of Using Standards	
Teacher Goals for the Observed Unit	
Assessment Relative to Teacher Evaluation	
Relationships with Colleagues Relative to Assessment	
Concerns with Assessment	
Finding the Balance	
Perceptions of A Typical Unit	
Examples of Unit Activities	

Interview Coding	
First Stage	Second Stage
Central Office and Assessment	

Researcher Reflexivity

For this current study, it is important to recognize our personal backgrounds to acknowledge our biases on this topic. The first author is a White male who taught 6th- and 7th-grade US History at the school in which this study took place. Thus, the first author knew key individuals at the school (e.g., the principal, the middle school instructional coach, and the social studies department chair). However, the first author had not been employed by the middle school for over three years and there was an observable change in the make-up of teachers and the social studies department—a number of the first authors' social studies teacher colleagues had left the school to teach elsewhere or had taken on a new role within the school division. Overall, at the time of the study, the first author was familiar with the structure of the social studies department and how they had traditionally assessed students in 6th-, 7th-, and 8th-grade social studies. The first author, and the second and third authors, were unaware how the middle school and social studies teachers were now using assessments in light of the shifting assessment policy context. The second author is a White male who taught high school social studies in a large Virginian school division for six years.

During the present study, the first author collected the data (i.e., both interviews, video-recorded classroom observations, field notes, and classroom artifacts). The first author also generated the first stage of codes for the interviews and field notes and wrote various analytic memos based on these first codes. The first and second author then determined the second stage of codes for the interviews and engaged in consensus coding to determine our themes and findings. The third author acted as a critical reviewer of the study's findings and of the completed manuscript as a whole.

The Unit-of-Study

We observed Mrs. Hall’s fourth unit-of-study on the “The Colonies” (i.e., Roanoke Island (Lost Colony), the Jamestown settlement, Plymouth Colony, Massachusetts Bay Colony, Pennsylvania, and Georgia outlined in the Unit States History to 1865 Standards of Learning Curriculum Framework document published by the VDOE; Standard USI.5a, Curriculum Framework). During the unit, we collected video-recorded classroom observation data, field notes, pre- and post-unit teacher interviews, and numerous classroom artifacts. Based on post-unit interview data, Mrs. Hall described Unit 4 in great detail from beginning to the end. In addition to the interview data, we utilized the video-recorded classroom observation and field notes data to determine a detailed timeline of the unit (please see Table 4 below).

Table 4

Summary of Mrs. Hall’s Unit 4

Day	Content	Instructional Strategies	Assessments Used
Day 1	Vocabulary related to the colonies (i.e. Roanoke Island, Jamestown settlement, Plymouth Colony, Massachusetts Bay Colony, Pennsylvania, and Georgia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Warm up question - Note-taking - Exit question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formative Questioning
Day 2	Roanoke Island (Lost Colony)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Warm up question - Performance-based Task—CSI Investigation: What happened to the Lost Colony? - Note-taking - Exit question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formative performance task (i.e., weighing evidence, constructing a theory, collaboration with group members, presenting to peers)
Day 3	Characteristics of the colonies (i.e., the Jamestown settlement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Warm up question - Textbook reading - Video clip - Short activity - Exit question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formative questioning - Short formative activity—students created sports/brand logos that represent a colonial region (i.e., New England, Mid-Atlantic, and Southern colonies)

Day	Content	Instructional Strategies	Assessments Used
Day 4	Characteristics of the colonies (i.e., Plymouth Colony, Massachusetts Bay Colony, Pennsylvania, and Georgia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Warm up question - Review game - Worksheet - Exit question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formative questioning - Formative review game - Worksheet review (with more formative questioning)
Day 5	Life in the English colonies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Warm up question - Worksheet/textbook work - Short activity - Exit question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formative questioning - Worksheet review (with formative questioning) - Short formative activity—same activity from Day 4, students present their logos
Day 6	Unit vocabulary review and colonial trades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Warm up question - Vocabulary review game - “Colonial Trades” project—students search for information about life and work in the colonies - Exit question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formative questioning - Vocabulary review game (with formative questioning) - Formative performance task (i.e., “Colonial Trades” project) - Vocabulary quiz
Day 7	Study guide review and geographical location of English colonies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Warm up question - Study guide review - Textbook reading - Online activity—students identify the individual colonies as quickly as possible - Exit question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formative questioning - Study guide review (with formative questioning) - Formative performance task (i.e., “Colonial Trades” project)
Day 8	Hierarchy of power in the English colonies (i.e., the monarchy, colonial governors, representatives, and small farmers) and French and Indian War	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Warm up question - Textbook reading - Note-taking - New project—“Create Your Own Government” - Exit question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formative questioning - Formative performance task (i.e., “Create Your Own Government” project)
Day 9	Review of unit content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Warm up question - Continuation of project—“Create Your Own Government” - Online review game - Exit question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formative questioning - Formative performance task (i.e., “Create Your Own Government” project) - Online review game (formative assessment)
Day 10	Review of unit content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Warm up question - Online review game - Continuation of project—“Create Your Own Government” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formative questioning - Online review game (formative assessment) - Summative 25-question multiple-choice test

Day	Content	Instructional Strategies	Assessments Used
		- Exit question	- Formative performance task (i.e., “Create Your Own Government” project)

Mrs. Hall explained that Unit 4 was unique in that she considered the first three units to be foundational and where students learn the basics (i.e., geography, why exploration and colonization happened, etc.). She described Unit 4 as an opportunity to set the stage for Unit 5, which uncovers the American Revolution. The second day of Unit 4 featured an activity (i.e., “an investigative report”) that supported students in critically examining evidence regarding the Lost Colony of Roanoke (Post-unit Interview). This was the first activity of the unit that clearly included elements of performance tasks (e.g., weighing evidence, collaborating with peers, formulating a thesis, and presenting their group conclusions in front of the class). Mrs. Hall described that, after Roanoke, she taught her students specific details about the other colonies and that Unit 4 was a primer for the road to revolution in Unit 5. This idea of Unit 4 setting the stage for the Revolution in Unit 5 was a main theme that she stressed often. Further, Mrs. Hall described that a main theme of Unit 4 was the interdependence among the New England, Mid-Atlantic, and Southern colonies. Mrs. Hall also explained that the theme of interdependence was a main goal of the unit for her as a teacher. She also explained other goals that she had in mind for her students to learn and accomplish over time.

Mrs. Hall outlined three main goals for Unit 4. These goals included that students would (1) understand the interdependence among the North American colonies; (2) know the unique characteristics of the colonial regions, colonial life, and perspectives that were present within those regions; and (3) delineate why these perspectives existed and relate them to modern-day life. As mentioned, interdependence served as a theme for Unit 4 and, in this case, a main goal as well. Regarding the second and third goals of the unit, Mrs. Hall expressed that colonial life was different in each region, especially in the case of the Quakers in Pennsylvania and that perhaps students would understand some of the more modern ways of living life that they took on.

Findings

We found that, in a changing policy context, Mrs. Hall enacted a unit-of-study that included a variety of assessments, (i.e., diagnostic, formative, and summative) that was both consistent and incompatible with the intentions of the new assessment policy that focused on the development and enactment of alternative assessment. Further, her assessment decisions appeared to be influenced by a number of factors including the school and department culture, her teaching philosophy, the input of administration and instructional coaches, and both the current and previous assessment policy contexts. Overall, Mrs. Hall navigated this complex policy context by adopting what she termed as a “balanced approach” to assessment.

Mrs. Hall’s Assessment Use and Decision-making

General Overview

Mrs. Hall utilized a number of different assessments (please see Table 1) throughout the unit for varied reasons. First, she used a great deal of diagnostic and formative questioning each day of the unit. At the start and end of each day, students answered a warm up and an exit question, which she stated she used as an on-going, formative way to assess her students throughout the unit. In addition, when students took notes or read aloud from their textbook, Mrs. Hall continuously asked whole-class questions (e.g., “What is interdependence? Why were the colonial regions interdependent on one another?”) to orient students to prior content and knowledge to scaffold their learning of new information. Further, Mrs. Hall used worksheets to review content and textbook readings to support impromptu classroom discussions. Review games were also used throughout the unit to help students before the formative vocabulary quiz and summative unit multiple-choice test. Online activities and a review session based on the unit study guide were also used.

Authentic and Traditional Assessments

Mrs. Hall explained that she made a concerted effort to add more authentic assessments or, in her words, “hands-on” projects, to the unit-of-study (Pre-unit Interview). She was compelled to add such projects based on a number of school factors (described in-depth below), her teaching philosophy, and

attempting to find a balance of both traditional (i.e., worksheets, study guide reviews, multiple-choice tests, etc.) and new authentic assessments that get students' "hands dirty" (Pre-unit Interview). When asked about how she preferred to use such projects as history assessments, she stated:

I think just getting a more hands-on approach, maybe a little more research-based because I feel like history is just so necessary to do your research to begin with and we're starting to really see that in these current times. But, I think, yeah, just letting them get their hands dirty and letting them incorporate more things and getting them excited. (Post-interview)

When asked what she thought would be exciting for her students, she stated:

I want to make it fun and interactive because they need to understand the connections that are being made to the past to the present, and that they are affecting history every single day and how they impact the world.

In other words, Mrs. Hall's use of "hands-on" projects that let students to get their "hands dirty" by understanding real-world connections is quite similar to how authentic assessment is described in the literature. For example, Wiggins and McTighe (2005) explain that authentic assessment is composed of activities that get students to partake in a sometimes "hands-on" project that supports them to "use knowledge in real-world ways" and think about the "messiness of the problem" (p. 337). This conception of authentic assessment is reflective in Mrs. Hall's use of assessment across the observed unit-of-study.

At the beginning of the unit (Day 2), Mrs. Hall used an activity comprised of performance tasks to teach students about The Lost Colony of Roanoke Island. She explained that this activity was found on Teachers Pay Teachers and was drawn to it because it would have her students take on the role of a CSI agent that must weigh the evidence of multiple scenarios and work with their group members to construct a theory for why the colony disappeared. The groups would then have to present their findings to their peers, which resulted in discussions about why particular pieces of evidence and concluding theories were more convincing than others. Overall, the students weighed evidence, constructed a theory, collaborated with their group members, and finally presented their contentions.

On the fifth day of the unit, Mrs. Hall continued using “hands-on” projects. She instructed students to create unique logos that could represent a particular colonial region. Students then had to present their logos to their peers and include evidence for why the logo aligns with the characteristics of that region. During the sixth and seventh days of the unit, Mrs. Hall had students partake in a formative, performance assessment entitled “Colonial Trades” that supported students in making a “real-world” connection. Students were instructed to select a colonial trade they learned about and had recently taken notes on. Students then completed a template that Mrs. Hall had created that asked them to identify the name of the trade, what the trade’s role and responsibilities were, why this was an important job during the colonial period, and to draw similarities and differences between the trade and a modern-day example of that trade (e.g., the colonial trade of a wheelwright may translate to the modern job of tire manufacturer). Mrs. Hall made it a specific priority to support students in making these connections across time.

On the eighth day of the unit, the “Create Your Own Government” project was introduced. This project had students working in groups to formulate a national government that they would want to live in. Students were instructed to name their country and use online resources to determine their type of government. Students were then asked to determine a set of rules that they would have to follow if they lived with their governments. Mrs. Hall intended this project to flow into the next unit on the American Revolution. Students were expected to eventually put together a PowerPoint presentation that they would share with the class. In other words, this was another “hands-on” assessment that she was compelled to add to the unit to find a balance in the types of assessments she utilized. At the end of the unit (Day 10), the students took a 25-question multiple-choice unit test that mimicked a traditional end-of-course SOL test.

Mrs. Hall’s Assessment Decision-making

Mrs. Hall’s assessment decision-making appeared to be influenced by a number of factors including the school and department culture, her teaching philosophy, the input of the school principal and instructional coach, and the past and current assessment policy contexts. Each of these influences

seemed to be key reasons why Mrs. Hall held on to the traditional and new, authentic ways to assess students. For example, she used unit multiple-choice tests that had been used by previous social studies teachers for years, but was also compelled to use authentic projects embedded with performance tasks to find a balanced way to determine what her students knew and understand. She also described, however, that her assessment use was influenced by the culture of the school and social studies department and the ways in which assessment has traditionally been viewed.

School and Department Culture. Analysis of the interview data, Mrs. Hall's assessment decision-making appeared to be influenced by the school and department culture within Sanders Middle School. It was clear that the school and department culture emphasized three major reasons for the use of assessment. The school principal and instructional coach indicated that assessments were used for particular reasons and Mrs. Hall appeared to view assessment in specific ways related to each of these reasons.

First, assessments were used to fulfill a VDOE requirement. For example, the new assessment policy regulated by the VDOE requires school divisions to develop and enact local alternative assessments. The school leaders and social studies department acknowledged this state-mandated process and they tended to describe their assessments relative to the state's expectations. Mrs. Hall made sure to incorporate more authentic assessments with performance tasks throughout the unit-of-study to reflect the VDOE's intentions with this requirement. Second, assessments were also viewed as a way to motivate students. Mrs. Hall indicated that she used end-of-unit, summative multiple-choice tests to motivate students to learn historical information and so that they would know how well they were doing. She stated in the pre-unit interview that "...a part of me feels like some of these kids need the [test] numbers because it's the only way it's going to click for them to know if they're doing great or not."

At the same time, her school principal, Mr. Simon, also indicated the difficulty with transitioning away from such tests:

And I'll be honest with you, we're still struggling with it. I think a lot of schools struggle with this. Alternative assessments are not like I said, we've been in this culture of multiple-choice tests

and SOLs for so long that a lot of teachers, they can't think of any other way. Especially even some of the younger teachers who are coming in, when they went through school, [testing is] all they had too. (Principal Interview)

In other words, he made it clear that the mindset of testing as a means to assess was seemingly ingrained in the school culture and has been a challenge to break away from.

Lastly, assessments were largely described as a means to derive a grade for the gradebook. Mrs. Hall indicated that formative and summative assessments were frequently used to satisfy the administrations expectation of a set number of grades in each teachers' gradebooks. She also explained how her teacher colleagues in the social studies department used test scores: "I think in some ways, it helps them to give...just to have a grade in the book, unfortunately. But, I think too that it's just the model that we've always followed" (Post-interview). Overall, based on the interview data analysis, it was rare that assessment was described as tools to understand what students know about history.

Thus, Mrs. Hall and her principal and instructional coach described assessment as an important tool with multiple, complex uses. Some of the ways in which these individuals conceptualized assessment fell into the traditional sense of assessment (e.g., that assessments are used to derive data that can inform instruction, but may be viewed as more important when it can be synthesized into a grade for the gradebook). It was clear, however, when Mrs. Hall was interviewed that she not only made decisions about her assessment use based on the school and department culture. Her teaching philosophy was also determined to be an influential piece in her decision-making.

Teaching Philosophy. Mrs. Hall explained that a key part of her teaching philosophy was learning to improve her skills and knowledge as an educator. Mrs. Hall provided an example of a veteran teacher that had been teaching at the middle school for decades and how this teacher still works with other colleagues to improve her skills and knowledge. Mrs. Hall described this situation as "neat to see" because it served as a constant reminder that "you don't stop learning" (Pre-unit Interview). Mrs. Hall saw herself always continuing to learn more, which also translated into her philosophy on assessment. Her school division had provided a book written by Ted Dintersmith entitled *What School Could Be* that

uncovered different ways of going about innovatively assessing students, which opened her mind to new ways of incorporating it in her classroom. Mrs. Hall explained a circumstance from the book that she noticed pertained to her students:

In the book, they were talking about how some of these kids have only been taught to take a test. I noticed the [students] that come to my desk and ask me—it always catches me off guard because it's my higher-level kids, who have essentially been trained to take a test, who come to me with the most questions. Whereas, my lower-level kids run with it. They're given that creative freedom and they can do it, so that's been really eye opening to me.

This quote indicates a moment where Mrs. Hall reflected on how different assessment types worked for her particular students. Further, the book had Mrs. Hall questioning what she and her students were interested in, which translated into her providing students more time to research their personal interests and also giving them specific prompts that they could “run” with.

Mrs. Hall also stated that her teaching and assessment should include both “straight-forward multiple-choice tests” and projects because using only one of these assessment types alone would be an insufficient way to determine what students know. She stated in the post-unit interview:

[The multiple-choice test] is just going to ask the simple questions and maybe they'll answer it and get it right and maybe they'll get confused by the question. Whereas, if you just ask them directly and they show you in a project format, it might come out a bit differently and they may actually feel more confident about their presentation and their understanding of it. Like I said, sometimes I love the tests and sometimes I feel like it truly does not encapsulate everything that these kids know and it's trying to figure out how these kids can show you what they know.

She further stated that the traditional usage of multiple-choice tests had been supported for so long, which made incorporating project-based activities a difficult endeavor. However, she found the VDOE's attempt to shift away from traditional, high-stakes tests to more performance assessments as an important one.

She also understood that finding the middle ground (i.e., incorporating both assessment types) may be the best route that the state could take to help school divisions, teachers, and students. She stated: “I

completely understand how it could be difficult...I think it's there and that it will end up at a division-level. But, I mean, it's just a matter of finding the balance" (Post-unit Interview).

School Principal and Instructional Coach. Both the school principal, Mr. Simon, and the instructional coach, Mr. Brooks, appeared to influence Mrs. Hall's assessment decision-making as well. Mrs. Hall worked closely with the school principal and instructional coach regarding instruction and assessment. It was clear, however, that the principal had different ideas regarding the shift in assessment policy compared to the instructional coach. Mr. Simon supported the new shift to alternative assessment, but grappled with how teachers could be evaluated without the traditional, high-stakes test data. He stated: "And, that's the ultimate question: how do you get the data that you need to be able to get the Smart Goals information from the alternative assessment?" In other words, it appeared that he was struggling with the expectations of the traditional, high-stakes assessment policy context where teachers' evaluation was based largely on student test scores.

Mr. Brooks, on the other hand, strongly supported the new shift and described it as a potential opportunity for positive change regarding how students are equitably assessed. Referencing the policy change, he stated:

Right now, if we harness this [policy change], we could revamp a lot of things. This is a way we could look back and really put a mirror on this and see what's working and what isn't working and why not use this as a catalyst for equity pieces and rethinking classrooms and class sizes and hopefully we get more spotlight on the profession. You know, seeing how important it is.

Thus, there was a tension between each of these school leaders' conception of what the assessment shift meant for teachers. Mr. Simon described the assessment shift relative to the traditional way of evaluating teachers using test scores. Mr. Brooks described it as a way to reflect on the traditional way of using assessment and saw it as a way to reimagine issues surrounding equity, class size, and rethinking classroom overall. Mrs. Hall explained she navigated this tension by taking a middle-ground approach to assessment—one that placed importance on both the traditional use of assessment and the new shift to enact alternative assessment.

Past and Current Assessment Policy Contexts. Each of the school leaders' conceptions of the assessment shift were reflective of the past and current assessment policy contexts. Mr. Simon grounded his view on the new policy in the previous assessment context that had defined student and teacher evaluation for two decades. He stated that the school's focus has been, for a number of years, on "English and reading and literature" because that was what the state tested. Because the state eliminated the tests for U.S. History to 1865, he explained how he did not emphasize history as much as he would like. He also indicated that the state had not spotlighted the shift to alternative assessment enough either:

Because the state hasn't pushed the [alternative] assessments as much, I would say that we haven't pushed them as much. We've done what we've been asked to do. We've worked on it as we could.

But, we haven't hit it as hard as we possibly could at this time.

Thus, it was clear that Mr. Simon maintained a focus on the tested subjects. This makes sense because he was expected by school division administrators to evaluate teachers based on test score data, which he found to be difficult with U.S. History to 1865 since it was no longer tested by the state. But, that also meant Mr. Simon questioned what data could be derived from alternative assessments and how it could be useful.

Mr. Brooks's conception of assessment policy was focused on the current shift—looking for alternative ways to assess students to improve a variety of educational issues. He recognized why Mr. Simon would hold onto the tools of the past assessment policy context (i.e., multiple-choice tests, test score data, the traditional evaluation system) because the school is ultimately "judged based on [test] numbers" (Instructional Coach, Interview 1). But, Mr. Brooks intended to push toward alternative assessment development and enactment. His main goal was to provide training and other professional development opportunities for Mrs. Hall and the other social studies teachers in the department to get them interested in the alternative assessment push. For example, Mr. Brooks indicated that, based on the new assessment policy, that he sent Mrs. Hall to two different professional development opportunities, including one field experience where teachers learned about untold narratives of enslaved people at Monticello. Further, Mr. Brooks set up training opportunities for another teacher in the department with

Teaching Tolerance (now known as Learning for Justice) and another on the Inquiry Design Model (IDM). Mr. Brooks stated that he wanted the social studies teachers to be versed in “culturally responsive, performance-based, summative, inquiry” to provide direction for assessment development. Overall, Mr. Brooks’s conceptions of the new assessment policy context resulted in a focus on trainings and professional development that Mrs. Hall indicated was important for her education as a history teacher and assessment gatekeeper. Mrs. Hall also explained how this was sometimes easier said than done due to the lasting influences of the past assessment policy context.

Mrs. Hall described in both interviews that each context was important to understand, but that it was also necessary to adapt to the new shift. She called herself a “SOL and No Child Left Behind kid” and that it was difficult to transition away from thinking about the most important use of assessment as just a test score (Pre-unit Interview). In his interview, Mr. Simon also reiterated how Mrs. Hall grew up taking state tests as well as other, younger teachers in the school building. He stated that it may be even difficult for younger teachers to move away from such conceptions of assessment. Mr. Brooks stated in his interview that Mrs. Hall’s beliefs about assessment were more aligned with his in the ways of seeing performance assessment as a potentially more effective way to assess students. In addition, Mr. Brooks made it an imperative to have Mrs. Hall attend professional development opportunities to view assessment in a more critical way compared to the way it had been used for decades. Thus, Mrs. Hall acknowledged both assessment policy contexts and the ways in which each of her school leaders made sense of it through their direct actions. These contextual influences appeared to substantially affect Mrs. Hall’s assessment decision-making.

A “Balanced Approach” to Assessment

Mrs. Hall navigated the changing policy context by adopting what she termed a “balanced approach” to assessment. During the unit-of-study, we clearly observed her using traditional assessment tools of the past (e.g., the multiple-choice tests and test score data) and the assessment tools that the VDOE and Mr. Brooks were hoping she would use (e.g., more authentic activities that included performance tasks). It makes sense then that she described in both interviews that her approach to

assessment decision-making was “just a matter of finding the balance”—essentially finding the balance between the past and current assessment policy contexts and between her principal and instructional coach’s perceptions and expectations.

Mrs. Hall also explained the challenge with being a “SOL and No Child Left Behind kid” and that transforming her thinking about assessment is sometimes difficult as an educator. At the same time, she described that some educators embrace the other side of assessment and “don’t give grades or they’re just strictly PBL (project-based learning),” which she also described as “amazing” and that she’s working her “way into a nice balance of the two” (Pre-unit Interview). Her past experiences taking tests as a student reflect the past assessment policy context and indicate a challenge shifting her frame of reference away from what assessment has seemingly always been and gatekeeping the kinds of assessment experiences her current student can have.

Her decision to balance her assessment use was clearly based on her principal’s expectations regarding evaluation. She indicated that she included a traditional, summative multiple-choice test as her final exam because that test data would be used for her evaluation, which also compelled her to teach to the test for a set number of weeks per semester. If she had more time, she stated she would include more hands-on projects. As Mrs. Hall was trying to find the most balanced approach, she still described that the use of multiple-choice tests was the “ultimate” type of assessment because she was evaluated as an educator based on her student test scores (Post-unit Interview).

Nonetheless, Mrs. Hall felt strongly about her goal of a balanced approach, but also described that her balanced approach was still to be found—that it was, in other words, a work in progress. Perhaps this indicated her understanding of the dynamic nature of what assessing students in middle school history will be based on the shifting policy context. Overall, she was expected by her principal to hold on to most of the traditional tools typically used for high-stakes testing (e.g., utilizing multiple-choice summative assessments at the end of each unit and the final exam), but felt compelled to add new ones as the assessment policy context shifted.

Discussion and Conclusion

The data in this study suggest that Mrs. Hall enacted a unit-of-study that included a variety of assessments that did and did not reflect the intentions of the new assessment policy. Further, her assessment decisions were influenced by the school and department culture, her teaching philosophy, the input of the school principal and instructional coach, and the current and previous assessment policy contexts. Overall, Mrs. Hall navigated this complex policy context by adopting what she termed as a “balanced approach” to assessment.

Ball (2007) argues that “policies do not normally tell you what to do; they create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do is narrowed or changed or particular goals or outcomes are set” (p. 270). Thus, it is not surprising that Mrs. Hall would use a variety of assessments and navigate the new assessment policy context by taking a balanced approach. In addition, it then makes sense that Mr. Simon and Mr. Brooks had differing conceptions of the policy as well, especially when the policy did not outline a clear break from the traditional use of assessment data to evaluate teachers. In other words, the new assessment policy enactment was simply to eliminate the end-of-course state test and asked school divisions to develop alternative assessments as a replacement. Mrs. Hall took a balanced approach based on a number of factors as a means to create social action in an “ongoing, interactional, and unstable” assessment policy context (Ball, 2017, p. 10).

Mrs. Hall made particular decisions and weighed specific criteria as an assessment gatekeeper. She chose a combination of traditional assessment and other activities that included performance tasks. It is not surprising that she would hold on to the traditional assessment tools when she and her school leaders had little familiarity with what the alternative may look like (Weick, 2007). Mr. Simon, in particular, was expected to hold onto the traditional tools (i.e., the use of test data as a means to evaluate teachers) and grappled with the shift in assessment policy. Mr. Brooks, on the other hand, described a willingness to drop all of the traditional tools and to adopt new ones to push how assessment is utilized. Mrs. Hall was the gatekeeper of her students’ experiences of classroom-based assessment, but she navigated the differing assessment viewpoints of the both Mr. Simon and Mr. Brooks. Based on our data,

it was clear that Mrs. Hall held onto some of the traditional tools as her principal expected and added new, performance-based assessments that her instructional coach described as imperative.

This study indicates a case where policy implementation was convoluted; where the culture of the school and department, personal teaching philosophy, and the expectations of school leaders influenced Mrs. Hall's assessment decisions; and, where Mrs. Hall decided to hold on to both the traditional and new assessment tools at the same time to navigate the ongoing and unstable assessment policy context. These findings add to a limited body of research on classroom-based assessment in history classrooms (Torrez & Claunch-Lebsack, 2013). As more traditional, high-stakes assessment policy contexts shift to ones where alternative assessments are the focus, teachers will have to continue making decisions about their assessment use and navigate complex social and political contexts to do so successfully. This study offers an initial glimpse at what that policy realization looks like and ways in which a teacher and her school leaders navigated the new context and made decisions regarding assessment use.

More empirical research is needed to investigate shifting assessment policy contexts and history teachers' assessment decision-making and utilization. In addition, future research should consider exploring the teachers' use of assessment in elementary and high school history. Perhaps this current study sheds light on potential investigations at this high school-level, but elementary history assessment policy contexts and the decisions made by elementary teachers may look quite different. Further, future empirical studies about classroom-based history assessment should focus on student learning. Research has shown that classroom-based assessment directly influences student learning (McMillan, 2011). The body of literature on classroom-based social studies assessment is limited (Torrez & Claunch-Lebsack, 2013). As new assessment policy contexts arise with the passage of federal legislation (e.g., ESSA) and with influential initiatives (e.g., *C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards* and the *Beyond the Bubble* project), more vital opportunities will surface to explore contexts beyond high-stakes testing and center teachers as assessment creators and gatekeepers.

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Appendix A**Pre-Interview Protocol**

Virginia Social Studies Assessment Research Project

January 21st, 2020

- 1. How long have you been teaching U.S. History I and/or U.S. History II?**
- 2. How would you describe your teaching style?**
- 3. Could you please describe your general approach to assessment? How do you assess student learning?**
 - a. Sub-question: Interviewer can reframe as: "What is your philosophy of assessment?"*
- 4. Could you describe how you use your assessment data?**
 - a. Sub-questions: Do you use it to have a grade? To meet state requirements? To inform instruction?*
- 5. Could you please describe how much autonomy you have regarding the creation of your assessments? Do you create them? Does the instructional coach or district help in any way?**
 - a. Sub-question: Have you been trained on using certain assessments?*
- 6. Could you describe if you have an end-of-year/semester culminating assessment?**
- 7. Please describe any professional development opportunities that you have had related to assessment. Were any of these opportunities geared toward social studies assessment?**
- 8. What does a typical unit look like?**
 - a. Sub-questions: How many days does a typical unit take? Are there any consistent types of assignments that you have students do (e.g., vocabulary work, exit tickets, etc.)?*
- 9. What is the unit that you will be teaching? (the unit that we'll observe)**
- 10. How would you describe your main objectives/learning targets for this upcoming unit-of-study?**
- 11. What types of assessment do you plan to use during this unit-of-study?**
 - a. Sub-questions: Are any of these assessments connected to the local alternative assessment? Does the local alternative assessment influence the summative assessment?*
- 12. Could you describe if you think your assessment drives your instruction? If so, how so?**
- 13. Could you describe how much communication you have with your central district office or others about assessment? Who do you talk to the most about assessment?**
- 14. Is there anything else that you would like to add?**

Post-Interview Protocol

Virginia Social Studies Assessment Research Project

March 24th, 2020

- 1. Can you describe the unit that you just taught in detail?**
 - a. Sub-questions: Do you ever feel pressured to cover the curriculum or standards during a unit-of-study? Do you ever feel like you have any time to cover anything else? Reading? Writing?*
- 2. How would you describe your main objectives/learning targets for this unit-of-study?**
- 3. Could you please describe your general approach to assessment for this unit? How did you assess student learning?**
- 4. Could you describe how you used your assessment data?**
 - a. Sub-questions: Do you use it to have a grade? To meet state requirements? To inform instruction?*
- 5. Could you describe the end-of-the-unit assessment that was given to students?**
- 6. Could describe if you think that your district has developed a local alternative assessment for your U.S. History course?**
 - a. Sub-questions: If so, how was it developed? How were you involved in the process? When did this process begin? Was there any teacher training involved for the implementation of this assessment?*
- 7. Could you describe if you have attended any VDOE workshops/conferences regarding the creation or implementation of such assessments?**
 - a. Sub-questions: Did these workshops/conferences change your beliefs about assessment? Did these workshops/conferences help with your instruction?*
- 8. Please describe if any of your assessments are tied to your evaluation as a teacher.**
 - a. Sub-questions: SMART Goals? Are there any professional incentives or consequences attached to how well students do on this assessment? (COPY OF ASSESSMENT?)*
- 9. Do you think your beliefs about assessment match with how you're currently advised to assess your students? (Do your beliefs match with your school leaderships beliefs about assessment?)**
 - a. Sub-question: Would you change, in any way, how you assess your students?*
- 10. Do you think that your role as a teacher should include developing new local alternative assessments?**
 - a. Sub-questions: Would there be adequate time in your schedule to do so? How could your district, school, or department best plan for the development of such assessments? Would*

you rather have the district create the assessment for you? How much autonomy would you like in this process? Do you think your principals would permit your department to create your own assessment?

Appendix B

Table 5

Definitions of Assessment Terms

Assessment Term	Definitions from the Literature
Authentic Assessment	“An assessment composed of performance tasks and activities designed to simulate or replicate important real-world challenges. The heart of authentic assessment is realistic performance-based testing—asking the student to use knowledge in real-world ways, with genuine purposes, audiences, and situational variables. Thus, the context of the assessment, not just the task itself and whether it is performance-based or hands-on, is what makes the work authentic (e.g., the ‘messiness’ of the problem, ability to seek feedback and revise, access to appropriate resources)” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 337).
Performance Assessment	Performance assessments are confirmations of mastery that “emulate that context or conditions in which the intended knowledge or skills are actually applied” (American Educational Research Association [AERA], American Psychological Association [APA], & National Council on Measurement in Education [NCME], 1999, p. 137).
Alternative Assessment	Alternative assessments “...ask students to perform, create, produce, or do something; tap high-level thinking and problem-solving skill; use tasks that represent meaningful instructional activities; invoke real-world applications; and, require new instructional and assessment roles for teachers” (Herman, 1992).
Performance Tasks	“A task that uses one’s knowledge to effectively act or bring to fruition a complex product that reveals one’s knowledge and expertise. Music recitals, oral presentations, art displays, and auto mechanic competitions are performances in both senses” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 346).

Appendix C

Principal Interview Protocol

- 1. Could you please describe your role as principal?**
 - a. Sub-question: What are your main objectives as principal? How long have you been the principal of your respective school?*
- 2. Could you describe if you think that your district has developed a local alternative assessment for U.S. History I and II?**
 - a. Sub-questions: If so, how was it developed? How were you involved in the process? When did this process begin? Was there any training involved for the implementation of this assessment?*
- 3. Could you describe if you have attended any VDOE workshops/conferences regarding the creation or implementation of such assessments?**
 - a. Sub-questions: Did these workshops/conferences change your beliefs about assessment? Did these workshops/conferences help with your instruction?*
- 4. If the district has not developed an assessment yet—Would you be willing to have your social studies teachers work together to create such an assessment or should the district perhaps take on this role? What are your thoughts on the creation of such an assessment?**
- 5. Could you please describe what you're looking for regarding assessment in social studies classrooms? What does successful assessment of student learning look like to you?**
- 6. How do you think your social studies teachers use assessment data? Do they work together or separately to create assessments?**
 - a. Sub-questions: Do they use it to have a grade? To meet state requirements? To inform instruction?*
- 7. How often have you seen (the observed teacher) teach this year?**
 - a. Sub-questions: How have you supported (the observed teacher's) instruction? Do you have a perspective on how she creates/uses assessment? Do you think your beliefs about assessment are similar to (the observed teacher)? Why or why not?*
- 8. Please describe if social studies teachers' assessments are tied to their evaluation as a teacher.**
 - a. Sub-questions: SMART Goals? Are there any professional incentives or consequences for teachers attached to how well students do on this assessment? Are there any incentives or consequences for you as a principal, if students do or do not well on teachers' assessments?*

9. Do you think your beliefs about assessment match the beliefs of your social studies teachers?

a. Sub-question: Would you change, in any way, how students are assessed at your school?

10. Do you think that your role as principal should include supporting the development of new local alternative assessments?

a. Sub-questions: Would there be adequate time in your schedule to do so? How could your district, school, or social studies department best plan for the development of such assessments? How much autonomy would you like in this process?

i. some of these questions are the same to one's above, but may be worth asking here again or in a similar fashion

Instructional Coach Interview Protocol

1. Could you please describe your role as an instructional coach?

a. Sub-questions: What are your main objectives as a coach? What teachers do you work the most with? Subject-areas? How long have you been an instructional coach? Did you teach previously? If so, what grades and subject-areas?

2. Could you please describe your general approach to assessment? What does successful assessment of student learning look like to you?

3. How do you think your teachers use assessment data?

a. Sub-questions: Do they use it to have a grade? To meet state requirements? To inform instruction?

4. Could you describe if you think that your district has developed a local alternative assessment for U.S. History I and II?

a. Sub-questions: If so, how was it developed? How were you involved in the process? When did this process begin? Was there any training involved for the implementation of this assessment?

5. Could you describe if you have attended any VDOE workshops/conferences regarding the creation or implementation of such assessments?

a. Sub-questions: Did these workshops/conferences change your beliefs about assessment? Did these workshops/conferences help with your instruction?

6. How often have you seen (the observed teacher) teach this year?

- a. *Sub-questions: How have you supported (the observed teacher's) instruction? Do you have a perspective on how she creates/uses assessment? Do you think your beliefs about assessment are similar to (the observed teacher)? Why or why not?*

7. Please describe if social studies teachers' assessments are tied to their evaluation as a teacher.

- a. *Sub-questions: SMART Goals? Are there any professional incentives or consequences for teachers attached to how well students do on this assessment? Are there any incentives or consequences for you as an instructional coach, if students do or do not well on teachers' assessments?*

8. Do you think your beliefs about assessment match the beliefs of the social studies teachers that you work with? Do your beliefs match with your school leaderships' beliefs about assessment?

- a. *Sub-question: Would you change, in any way, how students are assessed at your school?*

9. Do you think that your role as an instructional coach should include developing new local alternative assessments?

- a. *Sub-questions: Would there be adequate time in your schedule to do so? How could your district, school, or subject-area departments best plan for the development of such assessments? Would you rather have the district create the assessment for teachers? How much autonomy would you like in this process? Do you think your principals would permit the social studies department or individual teachers to create their own assessments?*

**Beginning Upper Elementary Mathematics Teachers' Utilization of Curriculum Resources and
Perceived Challenges Across Their First Three Years of Teaching**

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Abstract

Beginning elementary teachers face numerous challenges in their first years of teaching and are expected to make daily decisions regarding their utilization of curriculum resources. The purpose of this study was to investigate the specific challenges and resources that two beginning upper elementary mathematics teachers experienced and used from their first year of teaching to their third. We utilized conceptual elements from teacher agency (Biesta et al, 2015) and relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002) research and found that both teachers used a variety of curriculum, instructional, and relational resources across their first three years of teaching. The curriculum and instructional resources both supported and inhibited their design of mathematics units and lessons as did their relationships with their district-level mathematics instructional coaches and teacher colleagues. Ms. Scott maintained a stronger relationship with her instructional coach and exhibited a clearer sense of agency compared to Ms. Baker, which appeared to be based on their professional knowledge and experience; their interaction with specific social actors and materials within their environments; and their decisions based on the mathematics curriculum they aspired to teach. Observation data aligned with both teachers' descriptions of their first three years of teaching and may indicate differences between them regarding their experiences and challenges and the resources they utilized.

Keywords: beginning teachers, mathematics, relational trust, instructional coach, school leadership

Elementary teachers encounter various challenges during the first years of teaching. They must learn and teach new grade-level content for differing subject areas, utilize and manipulate curricular and instructional resources to support student learning, and navigate a school community that consists of countless social exchanges, expectations, and role responsibilities. Studies have found that these challenges influence beginning elementary teachers' instructional experiences and student learning. Beginning elementary teachers with weak content knowledge or more restrictive instructional resources and environments are likely to learn the least and are the least likely to adapt instruction to meet the needs of their students, while those with strong content knowledge, access to various instructional resources, and support for decision making regarding materials and instructional strategies are likely to learn more and are most able to adapt instruction (Valencia et al., 2006). Other research indicates that beginning teachers frequently receive little to no guidance for curriculum decisions within accountability environments that often pressure them to increase student learning and could greatly benefit from integrated and supportive school cultures (Coburn et al., 2011; Kardos et al., 2001; Kauffman et al., 2002). School leaders can counter challenges faced by beginning elementary teachers through their direct interactions with them and by providing additional supports, such as district-level instructional coaches and mentors (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

These studies have identified important aspects of beginning elementary teachers' experiences and the challenges they most often endure. However, research has largely focused on elementary reading regarding beginning teachers' experiences with curriculum resources and instruction and not on other important elementary subject areas, such as mathematics. More research is needed to examine elementary mathematics, in particular, as studies have found that early education in mathematics has been shown to improve learning trajectories (Duncan et al., 2007; Jordan et al., 2009). Thus, it is important to examine elementary mathematics teachers' access to instructional resources and capacity to enhance or develop curriculum, their agency in making instructional decisions, and how they socially engage with those individuals within their school communities who can support them with instruction. In addition, little

research has looked at the influence of district-level supports (e.g., subject-area-specific instructional coaches) on beginning elementary mathematics teachers' experiences with curriculum resources and how school environments and differing school leaders can influence the challenges they face.

This qualitative study attends to this gap in the literature by utilizing classroom observation and semi-structured interview data to examine the types of curriculum, instructional, and relational resources that two beginning upper elementary mathematics teachers utilized to design units and lessons across their first three years of teaching. Further, we investigated the various challenges that these teachers faced across their first three years of teaching as well. There are several purposes for investigating this topic. First, using a framework grounded in concepts derived from teacher agency research (Biesta et al., 2015) and relational trust research (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), we describe the challenges that the teachers faced with their school leadership. Second, we explain how both teachers' relationships with their division-level mathematics instructional coaches influenced their access to curriculum and instructional resources and their design of mathematics units and lessons. Third, we describe how the teachers' sense of agency was associated with their experiences, perceptions, and relationships within their respective school communities.

Review of Literature

The review of literature for this study focuses on extant research about principal leadership, mathematics coaches, teacher collaboration, and teacher agency. We open the review with an examination of how principals can support teachers of all grade levels, specifically looking at how principals supply teachers with adequate resources, provide a stable work environment, and support teacher collaboration and stronger perceptions of trust. We then discuss a conceptual article that explores distributive leadership as a means for effective principal leadership. Lastly, we consider teacher collaboration and teacher agency from a general perspective and present the study's research questions.

Definition of Resources

Curriculum resources can be thought of as the materials (e.g., a textbook, online platforms, etc.) that constitute a comprehensive course of study for a subject and grade level (Kaufman et al., 2020).

Instructional resources can be defined as the materials that intend to create learning opportunities for students (Kaufman et al., 2020). Thus, curriculum and instructional resources can be defined as the materials, supplies, and tools that reinforce a specific blueprint for learning (i.e., the curriculum) and support the purposeful direction of the learning process (i.e., the instruction). Many school districts offer teachers standards-aligned curricula, or packaged curricula, as a recommendation or requirement, but Kaufman et al. (2020) report that many teachers do not use the curricula materials for the majority of their instructional time. Teachers are more likely to “combine several curricula, modify materials, and integrate teacher-created activities” and use digital instructional resources as supplements (Kaufman et al., 2020, p. 12). Relational resources can be defined as those social relationships that comprise numerous social exchanges that are organized around schooling. Through these social exchanges teachers may obtain numerous resources to enhance their teaching. For example, teachers’ relationships with their principal leadership, instructional coaches, and teacher colleagues may be quite varied and may or may not result in teachers exerting agency related to decisions about curriculum and instruction.

Prior Research on Principal Leadership

Principals can have a direct influence on teachers, especially with how they construct and arrange their working conditions (Leithwood et al., 2004). These conditions include a stable working environment, access to instructional and curriculum resources, and opportunities for teacher collaboration, agency, and trust. Principals are also largely expected to be knowledgeable about the curricula that are taught in their schools and of the instruction that teachers provide students. Newmann et al. (2001) conducted a mixed methods study that found that principals can be vital in establishing instructional program coherence and supporting high-quality instruction. Further, research suggests that principals who are knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction can act alongside other school leaders (e.g., instructional coaches, grade-team leaders, etc.) and teachers to acquire instructional resources and support subject-specific instruction (Spillane et al., 2001). Spillane et al.’s (2001) research indicates that principals who enact distributed leadership across a number of formal and informal leaders are likely to promote instructional improvement. On the other hand, when principals do not share leadership

responsibilities and do not support teacher collaboration (which can engender important social ties), beginning teachers may struggle with a lack of communication from school leadership.

What principals can offer (e.g., a stable work environment, instructional resources, support for teacher collaboration and agency) for teachers has been thoroughly researched relative to how principals' leadership is exercised. These working conditions, however, can also influence how principals enact their leadership, but less is known about how principals' structuring of working conditions shapes principal-teacher relationships or teachers' use of instructional resources and curriculum. For example, a large-scale study by Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) investigated how principal leadership was experienced by teachers and affected their enactment of instruction. A main finding of this research was that principals' choices to include non-administrators in the "decision-making arena," such as teachers and instructional coaches, can be a vital step to improve teacher instruction (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008, p. 470). In addition, the researchers indicated that increasing teachers' trust in administrators may be beneficial for a school's climate, but will not necessarily lead to improved classroom practice.

A mixed methods study by Bryk and Schneider (2002) found that principals can engender social trust among teachers and staff members, which may increase teacher collaboration and development. Social trust can be initiated when school leaders distribute their leadership across a school's social and situational contexts to work together with teachers. In a previously-mentioned conceptual piece, Spillane et al. (2001) indicate that when two school leaders, such as a principal and an instructional coordinator, collaborate with teachers to improve instruction, it may foster a situation where each school leader brings unique knowledge and expertise to the table. This points to questions about how school leaders can work together to support beginning teachers, who face a wide range of pressures during their first years of teaching, especially related to instruction.

Principals and other school leaders can also be important points of support for teachers. Burch and Spillane (2003) found that principals who frequently interacted with elementary teachers about their mathematics instruction expressed the need to further support teachers with internal and external expertise. The main source of internal expertise was curriculum coordinators who regularly visited

classrooms to observe and set up mathematics instruction workshops, and repeatedly discussed instructional matters with teachers. The curriculum coordinators also proved to be an important support for sharing external instructional materials with teachers. In other words, principals can make important decisions that result in teachers gaining access to vital instructional materials through collaboration with curriculum coordinators. This research points to the need for more research on how curriculum coordinators and subject-specific instructional coaches may act as important access points to expertise and resources and how principals may influence that interaction.

Prior Research on Instructional Coaches

Instructional coaching is a type of in-school professional development activity that attempts to promote instructional improvement and increase student achievement and is largely dependent on factors intrinsic to the school (Obara, 2010). Instructional coaches have been shown to play a vital role as “professional sense-makers,” whereby they take on an intermediary role, between administrators and teachers, developing curricula and equipping teachers with professional learning opportunities and instructional guidance (Domina et al., 2015, p. 359). Studies indicate that when instructional coaches support teacher learning through consistent collaboration, changes are likely to occur in classroom instruction and curriculum implementation (Camburn, 2010; Coburn & Russell, 2008). Coburn and Russell (2008) provide evidence that specific dimensions of teachers’ social networks (i.e., the structure of the network, access to expertise, and the depth of interaction among individuals) seem to be important for the implementation of mathematics curriculum within school communities. Instructional coaches potentially play a key role in creating ties with teachers, which may result in greater access to information regarding curriculum implementation (Coburn & Russell, 2008).

Other quantitative research (e.g., Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Kraft et al., 2018) has determined significant effects of instructional coaches on student achievement in mathematics and on teachers’ instructional practice. In a three-year, randomized controlled trial study, Campbell and Malkus (2011) found that the effect of mathematics instructional coaches on student achievement was not significant in the first year of coach placement in the upper elementary grades of three through five. This changed,

however, as the effect of the coaches on student achievement was significant in grades four and five in the second and third years of the study. The researchers considered the lack of significance in the first year to be a potential result of the instructional coaches not having enough meaningful interaction with teachers to “permit emergence of coherent collective efforts marked by active learning and focused on mathematics content and pedagogy” (Campbell & Malkus, 2011, p. 451). These findings are similar to those of the aforementioned qualitative studies in that instructional coaches may be key school leaders in supporting teachers once they create stronger social ties and increase interaction. Campbell and Malkus’s (2011) study, however, focused on urban or “urban-edge” school districts and did not examine how instructional coaching practices influenced teacher instructional practices (p. 450). More research is needed on this topic in other school environments, such as rural school districts, to further understand the possible influence of mathematics instructional coaches on teachers’ instructional.

Kraft et al.’s (2018) meta-analysis about the effect of instructional coaching on teachers’ instruction and student achievement found large positive effects of instructional coaching on teachers’ instructional practice, especially in elementary schools. The researchers also determined that pairing instructional coaching with instructional resources and curricula materials was associated with greater gains in instructional outcomes. To determine this result, the researchers analyzed 43 studies that consisted of a measure of instructional practice as an outcome. They also found that instructional coaching had a positive effect on student achievement across 31 studies that included measures of students’ academic performance. It is important to note, however, that the authors were unable to make general inferences about the effects of coaching on students’ mathematics achievement because 75 percent of the achievement effect sizes utilized reading assessments as outcome measures. Kraft et al. (2018) show that a great deal of the literature indicates that instructional coaching has a significant connection with teacher effectiveness in elementary schools, but more research is needed to explore the effects of coaching on student mathematics achievement.

Prior Research on Teacher Collaboration

Teacher collaboration encourages teachers to share experiences and to support one another (Bay et al., 1999). Collaboration can also promote accomplishment and self-confidence that can lead to teachers' feeling more confident about changing instructional practices (Ball, 1996). Various studies (e.g., Achinstein, 2002 and Kardos et al., 2001) point to the importance of understanding how school communities and the way in which they are structured influence collaboration among teachers. Achinstein utilized micropolitical and organizational theory to investigate the teacher communities of two urban, public middle schools in the San Francisco Bay Area that were involved in collaborative reform initiatives. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, she found that community and conflict were intertwined and that when teacher communities constructively engaged in conflict they had the greatest potential for growth and renewal. This study indicates that successful teacher communities may thrive on a certain degree of conflict and dissent in order to maintain collaboration.

Other studies have explored teacher collaboration from a different perspective—one that examines how professional cultures and the experience levels of teachers and school leaders influence collaboration. For example, Kardos et al. (2001) identified three types of professional cultures that new teachers may encounter. Both veteran- and novice-oriented cultures proved to be insufficient in supporting teacher collaboration. Integrated professional cultures, however, involved new teachers “in the pursuit of a common missions” with their more experienced colleagues and in frequent exchanges with their teacher peers and school leaders (Kardos et al., p. 283). This type of professional culture consisted of novice teachers, veteran teachers, and school leaders coming together to educate all students. As Kardos et al. (2001) note: “This kind of leadership facilitates collaboration and teamwork, is supportive and embedded in the work and life of the school, and has as its primary focus the improvement of teaching and learning” (p. 283). This study shows that teacher collaboration may be a key factor in supporting beginning teachers and that school leaders are important players in maintaining professional cultures.

Prior Research on Teacher Agency

Teacher agency is defined as the capacity of teachers to “act purposefully and constructively to direct their professional growth and contribute to the growth of their colleagues” (Calvert, 2016, p. 52). A key part of teacher agency is how teachers interact with, support, and respond to their colleagues within their school communities. A number of studies have examined how the organizational structure of schools influences teacher agency and their ability to form social ties. Baker-Doyle (2012) conducted a qualitative study and found that first-year teachers formed ties through a combination of their own agency and the influence of various contexts. First-year teachers who were social, committed to teaching, and self-assured formed stronger ties that they used to access instructional resources. In addition, Spillane et al. (2015) investigated school organizational structure and the individual characteristics of teachers relative to tie formation in two midsized school districts that both consisted of 14 elementary schools. They found that organizational structure was drastically more important than personal characteristics in tie formation. The researchers also examined the importance of perceived expertise in discerning which teachers asked for and provided instructional advice. They found that perceived expertise influenced teachers to seek instructional advice from school leaders, such as subject-specific instructional coaches.

Recent quantitative research by Lane and Sweeny (2019) examined early career teachers’ social ties with school leaders and how those networks affected teacher agency. These researchers studied 18 early career teachers and found that they typically had weak social ties with principals and instructional coaches, but stronger ties with instructional coaches overall. They reported that early career teachers demonstrated greater agency once they sought out resources beyond their grade-level team (Lane & Sweeny, 2019). They also found that early career teachers tended to see principals and instructional coaches as authoritative figures, but that these teachers formed stronger ties with their coaches over time. Third- and fourth-year teachers indicated that they perceived both strong and weak ties with their instructional coaches, which Lane and Sweeny (2019) suggested may mean that “teachers had agency in how they navigated their relationship with their schools’ instructional coach” (p. 17).

Overall, the extant literature suggests that both principals and instructional coaches can provide adequate resources for beginning teachers, engender a stable work environment, and support teacher collaboration. There is clearly a need, however, for more research on complex social ties among beginning teachers and various school leaders in rural contexts to better determine how beginning teachers' perceptions of these relationships influence the challenges they face and the mathematics curriculum resources they utilize.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine the specific challenges and resources that two beginning teachers experienced and used during their first three years of teaching. Accordingly, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. What types of resources do beginning upper elementary teachers utilize and how do these resources support or inhibit their design of mathematics lessons and units?
2. How do trust relations with principals and mathematics instructional coaches seem to affect beginning teachers' use of resources during their first three years of teaching?
3. How do beginning teachers draw on their own agency and trust relations to address challenges when teaching mathematics in differing institutional settings?

Conceptual Framework

In this study, we draw on the frameworks of teacher agency and relational trust. Teacher agency (Biesta et al., 2015) is the temporal engagement by teachers in various school environments where social engagement is informed by the past, oriented toward the future, and acted out in the present (Priestley et al., 2015). Biesta and colleagues' (2015) framework of teacher agency is centered on the idea that agency is something that teachers do or exert. They also outline the iterative, practical-evaluative, and projective dimensions of agency. The iterative dimension of agency consists of the reactivation by teachers of past patterns of thought and action, including both their life and professional histories. The practical-evaluative dimension of agency considers the cultural (e.g., ideas, values, beliefs, discourses, and language), structural (e.g., social structures, relationships, roles, power, and trust), and material (e.g.,

resources and physical environment) aspects of agency (see Figure 1 below). It is important to note the difference between agency and autonomy (understood as an absence of regulation). As Priestly et al. (2015) note: “Teachers granted autonomy may simply fail to achieve agency as they, for example, habitually reproduce past patterns of behavior, or as they lack cognitive and relational resources” (p. 8). Relational resources are key within the Biesta et al. (2015) framework as these social structures explain how social exchanges can alter trust among teachers and their school leaders and teacher colleagues. For a more critical look at relational trust, we drew on the work of Bryk and Schneider (2002).

Social exchanges are a vital aspect of the productivity of schools, especially considering how they shape teachers’ lives and experiences in their beginning years of teaching (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). The relationships that teachers share with other teacher colleagues, the parents of their students, and their school leadership (i.e., principals, instructional coaches, etc.) indicate the strength of a school’s social order, shared instructional practices, and expectations. Bryk and Schneider (2002) indicate that the daily social routines of schools include dependencies among students, teachers, principals, and parents and these dependencies can engender feelings of vulnerability that occur in unequal power relations. For example, beginning teachers can feel vulnerable in their relationships with school leaders who have power in making comprehensive instructional change. Relational trust theory views these relationships as discrete roles—in this case, teachers with school leaders. Other role relationships include teachers with students and teachers with parents. Within these role sets, each party involved reserves specific obligations and expectations for themselves and the other party. In this study, we focus primarily on teachers’ relationships with principals, instructional coaches, and other teachers. To explore how beginning teachers navigate social exchanges among various participants in their school communities and fit into the functioning of these communities, we drew on the relational trust concepts of competence and integrity and focus on the first two levels of the theory.

Competence refers to how well participants within a school community are perceiving the overall execution of an individual’s role responsibilities. Tschannen-Moran (2004) stated that competence is enacted by “engaging in problem solving, setting standards, buffering teachers, pressing for results” (p.

34). The perceived competence of beginning teachers may be centered on their capacity to manage student behavior or their skillfulness in delivering meaningful classroom instruction. For school leaders such as principals, the perceived competence of their role may revolve around their ability to lead school improvement, communicate with teachers about instructional practices, create agreed-upon organizational routines related to student discipline, and provide supplies and instructional materials for instruction (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Integrity can be thought of as the “consistency between what people say and do” (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 25). Every individual within a school community holds a unique perception of the integrity of others that can result in varied social exchanges and can sometimes lead to conflict. Bryk and Schneider (2002) indicate that integrity “demands resolutions that reaffirm the primary principles of the institution” (p. 26). Typically, a shared principle between school leadership and teachers is to support students and their interests. Beginning teachers can do this by seeking out additional resources to improve instruction and student learning. Principals may also accomplish this by establishing a shared belief system or a set of core purposes within a school that all can work with and refer back to during the various situations that may arise throughout a school year.

Both competence and integrity can play important roles in teacher-principal relations and teacher-teacher relations. Within teacher-principal relations, beginning teachers may perceive a sense of exploitation or vulnerability because of the inherent nature of the hierarchical arrangement. Relationships centered on developing trust, however, can assuage perceptions of exploitation and vulnerability within teacher-principal relations. Principals’ responsibilities make it difficult for them to carefully supervise teachers. Thus, principals mostly have to trust teachers to increase student learning and manage student behavior and parent communication on their own (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Teachers also typically trust their principals to establish a fair and ordered working environment and to provide sufficient instructional resources and professional support. Teacher-principal relations tend to be grounded in what Bryk and Schneider (2002) refer to as “distinct power asymmetry,” where principals utilize a sizable amount of power that influences teachers’ work conditions (p. 29). Consequently, principals’ authority and decision making can impact a teacher’s standing within the school community, which students are assigned to a

given teacher, and what types of instructional resources teachers can access. Principals' endeavors to reduce this power dynamic and teachers' perceptions of exploitation and vulnerability are vital.

Teacher-teacher relations are perhaps the only role set that consists of a fairly symmetric power balance. Teacher colleagues rely on one another to identify students' knowledge, skills, and limitations and trust one another to conduct the daily routines of the school. "Generalized reciprocity" is vital to the relational trust of teacher-teacher role sets (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 30). If one teacher covers recess or bus duty for another teacher, then they may expect a future favor. In addition, many teachers plan within grade-level teams where there is a shared understanding that everyone pulls their weight and offers their thoughts on how students should be learning. However, Bryk and Schneider also indicate that many teachers do not have enough shared time with teacher colleagues to examine shared beliefs, values, and prior work experiences and that teacher-teacher relations may consist of asymmetric power balances when beginning and veteran teachers are involved. For example, differences between beginning and veteran teachers may create challenges and hinder the creation of strong ties that produce higher levels of trust. Teachers may discern that their colleagues lack integrity when observing them punitively discipline students, refuse to take on new instructional practices, or dismiss support from grade-level team members. Any sign that a teacher may not be caring for students can create an environment where other teachers perceive a lack of integrity and competence.

The theoretical framework utilized for this study maintains that both integrity and competence are key concepts within social exchanges and role relationships in schools. Strong relational trust within a school context consists of clear role expectations where teachers and principals understand and presume that the core components of their job will be executed. For example, high levels of trust in teacher-principal relations may result in teachers gaining access to more instructional resources, as principals are key actors in making such allocative decisions (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Further, high levels of trust in teacher-principal relations may also result in beginning teachers facing fewer challenges, especially when teachers are able to voice their concerns with their principal. Bryk and Schneider indicate that when teachers have a direct line of communication to their principal they may likely feel more effective in their

jobs because they have access to key resources, experience better working conditions, and gain agency within their school community and classroom. It may also be the case that relations between instructional coaches and teachers and experienced teachers and beginning teachers may resemble teacher-principal relations in that there is an asymmetric balance of power. Higher levels of trust in teacher-instructional coach and experienced teacher-beginning teacher relations could result in access to instructional resources, mitigated challenges, and an increase in agency—particularly with instructional decisions. Lower levels of trust in any of these sets of relations could also make it more difficult for beginning teachers to access instructional resources, alleviate challenges, or establish agency within their school community.

Thus, relational trust theory suggests that, through numerous social exchanges and acknowledged role sets, beginning teachers perceive the degree of competence and integrity of their co-workers and make resolute decisions about their instruction and management of students. As a result, beginning teachers' navigation within these role sets can indicate how their perceptions influence their instruction, their capacity to obtain instructional resources, and their development of integral relationships with school leaders (i.e., principals, instructional coaches, etc.) and teacher colleagues. Further, when beginning teachers navigate such social exchanges and role sets, they can be enabled to exert their agency to make particular decisions about their curriculum and instructional practices.

Methods

Research Design

This qualitative, multiple-case study used data derived from a larger study that explored ambitious elementary instruction in both ELA and mathematics. The larger study included 175 beginning teachers from various school districts across the United States, but particularly in the states of Virginia, Michigan, and Connecticut. The two upper elementary mathematics teachers selected for this study were teaching in Virginia school districts and were interviewed five times each across their first three years of full-time teaching. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. In addition, each interview was double-coded (Saldaña, 2015), using coding software, by the research team members. As a result of this

coding process, themes and patterns were determined. More detail about the teacher and school district samples and how the data were collected and analyzed is described in the subsequent subsections.

Teacher and School District Samples

Teacher Sample

We selected two teachers to participate in this study who taught upper elementary mathematics because of the first author's background in teaching middle grades education and the second author's background in teaching elementary education. For this study, upper elementary teachers are defined as teachers teaching in grades 3 through 5. Ms. Baker taught 3rd grade for her first two years and then 4th grade in her third year while Ms. Scott taught 5th grade in her first year and then 4th grade for her next two years (these names are pseudonyms). Both teachers predominately taught mathematics during their daily teaching schedule and served as the only mathematics teacher for their grade-level teams. Overall, Ms. Baker taught two sections of mathematics each year across her first three years of teaching, while Ms. Scott taught three sections of mathematics for her first two years of teaching and four sections in her third year. (See Table 1 in Appendix A for study participant information.)

School Sample

The two teachers in this study were teaching full-time in differing rural school districts in Virginia (see Table 2 in Appendix A for school demographic information). Ms. Scott taught in a Title I elementary school that served 284 students in grades K through 5 during the 2017-2018 school year. In total, 71 students were eligible for free lunch (25%) and 19 for reduced-price lunch (6.7%). Out of the 284 students, 208 identified as White (73.2%), 32 as Hispanic (11.3%), 34 identified as multi-racial (12%), 8 identified as Black (2.8%), and 2 identified as Asian (0.7%) Regarding student enrollment by gender, 144 students identified as male (51%) and 140 identified as female (49%). Ms. Scott taught six students with diagnosed disabilities in her first year, three such students in her second year, and one such student in her third year. Across Ms. Scott's first three years of teaching, she taught six English Learners, one in her first year, two in her second year, and three in her third year. Ms. Scott also reported that she

taught one student identified as gifted in her first year, two in her second year, and twelve in her third year.

Ms. Baker taught in a Title I 3rd- and 4th-grade elementary school that served 532 students in the 2017-2018 school year. In total, 158 students (29.7%) were eligible for free lunch and 37 (7%) for reduced-price lunch. Out of the 532 students, 381 identified as White (71.6%), 74 students identified as Black (13.9%), 34 students identified as Hispanic (6.4%), 42 identified as multi-racial (7.9%), and 1 student identified as American Indian/Alaska Native (0.2%). Overall, 261 students identified as male (49.1%) and 271 identified as female (50.9%). In Ms. Baker's first year, she taught no students with disabilities. In her second year she taught seven students with disabilities and six in her third year. Across Ms. Baker's first three years of teaching, she taught only one English Learner student in her first year. Ms. Baker also reported that she taught five students identified as gifted in her first year, two in her second year, and three students in her third year.

Data Collection

Semi-structured Interviews and Protocols

For this study, the two beginning upper elementary teachers were interviewed five times each about their mathematics instruction—three times across the fall 2016 and spring 2017 and once each during the fall 2017 and fall 2018. One interview in 2016-17 and the interviews in fall 2017 and fall 2018 focused on the topic of mathematics instruction and resources for teaching mathematics. The teacher interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Questions focused on what types of curriculum resources they were utilizing and the sources of these resources in their first three years as full-time teachers (e.g., Can you describe a recent unit in mathematics that you taught? What resources did you draw upon to design this unit? Were any of these resources from your teacher preparation program?) as well as other questions regarding challenges (e.g., What has been challenging for you this year? What resources do you have available to help you address this? Are any of these resources from your teacher preparation program?) This data was uploaded to a software program to facilitate the coding process. (See Appendix B for each semi-structured interview protocol.)

Observation Data

Through the larger study that this current study stems from, video-recorded classroom observations were analyzed using the observational tool known as PLATO, which includes the capacity to capture features of standards-based mathematics instruction. PLATO addresses the elements of purpose, intellectual challenge, representation of content, connections to prior academic knowledge, connections to personal and/or cultural experiences, strategy use and instruction, modeling and use of models, feedback, classroom discourse, text-based instruction, accommodations for language learning, behavior management, and time management. We used PLATO mathematics scores to make inferences about the quality of each teachers' mathematics instruction. We also used survey data on the teachers' mathematical content knowledge (MCK) and mathematical knowledge for teaching (MKT). This data was utilized to identify and make statements about teacher differences across their first three years of teaching.

Analytic Strategies

As mentioned, each interview was double-coded (Saldaña, 2015), using coding software, by the authors. Thematic and pattern codes were also determined and applied to the interview data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2018) was utilized to determine individual differences among the beginning upper elementary mathematics teachers as well as changes across the teachers' first, second, and third years of teaching. In particular, the following codes were identified after the first round of coding: resources, challenges, and administration. It was determined after the first round that we should add two more additional codes (i.e., references to math content and instructional activities) and distinguish challenges as either resolved or unresolved. With these final codes, we coded all 10 interviews and then compared and contrasted the coded data. In the instance where there was disagreement over a code (which rarely occurred), the two authors discussed the situation until we reached an agreement.

After each round of coding, detailed analytical memos were written and reviewed by each author for associations with the various elements of the relational trust framework. At this stage in the coding and memo writing process, it was determined that competence and integrity clearly stood out as key

elements in the experiences of the teachers. These memos also consisted of compiled notes regarding the coding to support comparisons, basic information about the teachers (e.g., how many classes of mathematics they taught per year, how many students they taught per year, etc.), and initial findings. The memos made it possible to determine challenges with school leadership that both teachers faced, their important relationships with their mathematics coaches, and their degree of agency by their third year of teaching. The first theme that emerged was that both teachers faced particular challenges with their school leadership, especially with their principals. The second emergent theme was the role of each teacher's mathematics coach and how they supported the teachers in accessing instructional resources and designing mathematics curricula. The last theme to emerge was the importance of teacher agency. After coding all of the interviews twice and writing various memos, it became clear that the teachers differed when it came to their sense of agency by their third year of teaching. Our methodical approach to coding, determining themes, and writing analytical memos made it possible to establish important initial findings.

Establishing Validity

In this study, we used a number of different strategies to establish validity. First, a multiple-case study design (Yin, 2018) was used to construct a larger picture of the phenomenon of interest. Second, peer review and debriefing (Glesne, 2006) were utilized to examine the overall study and to narrow the focus to the two beginning upper elementary mathematics teachers. Lastly, we used survey data collected through the larger study of which this current study was a part. This survey data was used to confirm the teachers' grade levels, the number of mathematics classes they taught, and the number of students with disabilities, English learner students, and gifted students that each teacher taught across their first three years. These surveys were completed by the teachers each year that they participated in the study (i.e., fall of 2016 through spring of 2018).

Limitations

This current study investigated two cases of beginning upper elementary mathematics teachers. To further investigate beginning teachers' perceived challenges and utilized curriculum resources, more research is needed that consists of teachers who work in varied educational contexts. Further, only semi-

structured interviews were collected and analyzed. A more robust triangulation of data collection methods could be useful in determining how the beginning teachers perceived challenges and utilized elementary mathematics curriculum resources.

Findings

For this study, we found that both teachers used a variety of curriculum, instructional, and relational resources across their first three years of teaching. The curriculum and instructional resources that the teachers utilized both supported and inhibited their design of mathematics units and lessons. Further, the relationships that the teachers maintained with their district-level mathematics instructional coaches and teacher colleagues both supported and inhibited the teachers' design of mathematics units and lessons. It was clear that Ms. Scott maintained a stronger relationship with her instructional coach and exhibited a clearer sense of agency compared to Ms. Baker. These differences in agency appeared to be based on how each teacher described circumstances where they utilized their professional knowledge and experience, interacted with specific social actors and materials within their environments, and made decisions based on the mathematics curriculum they aspired to teach. Observation data also align with both teachers' descriptions of their first three years of teaching and may shed light on differences between them regarding their experiences and challenges and the resources they utilized.

Types of Resources Utilized

Both Ms. Scott and Ms. Baker utilized a number of resources across their first three years of teaching. These resources included curriculum and instructional resources (e.g., packaged mathematics curricula and various online resources) and relational resources (e.g., district-level mathematics instructional coaches and teacher colleagues). The type and utilization of curriculum and instructional resources were similar across both teachers' first three years of teaching as were their identified relational resources (see Table 1 in Appendix A). Ms. Scott, however, was never offered a packaged mathematics curriculum, while Ms. Baker was offered such a curriculum and used it in every year of her teaching.

Ms. Scott

In Ms. Scott's first year of teaching, she taught three sections of 5th-grade mathematics and did not have access to a packaged curriculum for mathematics. Thus, she used online resources, such as Pinterest and iReady—an online instruction and assessment program—to better support the design of her mathematics curriculum. She also reported that she used instructional strategies derived from her teacher preparation program that supported her mathematics instruction. Regarding relational resources, she described supportive relationships with a special education teacher, her 4th-grade teacher colleagues, and a 5th-grade teacher who worked in the other elementary school within the school district. Lastly, she maintained a productive relationship with the mathematics instructional coach.

In Ms. Scott's second year of teaching, she made a grade-level change and taught three sections of 4th-grade mathematics. Similar to her first year of teaching, she did not have a packaged curriculum and rather used a number of online resources, including Classroom Dojo, Plickers, iReady, and Teachers-Pay-Teachers (TPT). The number of online resources seemed to increase from her first year to the second. She also utilized a bank of state test questions and continued using instructional strategies that she obtained in her teacher preparation program. For relational resources, she maintained many of the same relationships from her first year of teaching. She identified strong relationships with her 4th-grade teacher colleagues and the same 5th-grade teacher who worked within the district but in a different school building. Lastly, she maintained a productive relationship with her mathematics instructional coach.

Ms. Scott continued teaching 4th-grade mathematics in her third year of teaching, but increased her sections of mathematics from three to four. As was the case in her first two years of teaching, she did not have access to a curriculum for her mathematics teaching. She indicated, however, that her instructional coach offered her CueThink, an online platform that attempts to teach students problem-solving skills and ways of thinking about mathematics. Ms. Scott decided not to use CueThink for reasons described in the next section. Instead, she continued using the online resources she identified in her second year of teaching, including iReady and TPT. Regarding relational resources, she maintained the

same relationships from her second year (i.e., with 4th- and 5th-grade teacher colleagues and her instructional coach).

Ms. Baker

In Ms. Baker's first year of teaching, she taught two sections of 3rd-grade mathematics. Unlike Ms. Scott, Ms. Baker used a packaged curriculum (i.e., Investigations 3) in her first year. A review of the Investigations 3 curriculum for grade 3 indicated that the instructional materials lack "mathematical focus and coherence" and does not spend the "majority of instructional time on major work of the grades" (Edreports.org, 2015). This curriculum was reviewed by EdReports.org and found to have some of the lowest overall grades for any curriculum on their website.

Ms. Baker indicated that she supplemented the packaged curriculum with online resources, including TPT and Kahn Academy. She also utilized a school-wide Google Drive that comprised varied mathematics resources (e.g., worksheets, PowerPoint slideshows, sample lesson plans, etc.). Further, and similar to Ms. Scott, she utilized methods strategies from her teacher preparation program to support her instruction. For relational resources, she maintained relationships with a 3rd-grade teacher colleague and her mathematics instructional coach. It also appeared that she did not maintain as many relational resources relative to Ms. Scott across her first three years of teaching.

In her second year of teaching, Ms. Baker once again taught two sections of 3rd-grade mathematics and utilized similar curriculum and instructional resources compared to her first year of teaching. For example, she continued utilizing Investigations 3 along with online resources (i.e., TPT and Kahn Academy) and still utilized the school-wide Google Drive that consisted of a range of mathematics resources. Regarding relational resources, she maintained a productive relationship with the mathematics instructional coach and established important relationships with other 3rd-grade teachers at her school. This was a change from her first year, where she indicated a close relationship with only one 3rd-grade teacher.

Similar to Ms. Scott, Ms. Baker experienced a grade-level change from 3rd-grade to 4th-grade mathematics in her third year of teaching (2018-19), but maintained her teaching load of two sections.

This grade-level change resulted in the absence of a packaged curriculum. Ms. Baker indicated, however, that she was offered a packaged curriculum (i.e., Eureka Math Grade 4) soon into the school year, but decided not to use it based on her perceptions of her students' needs. The Eureka Math Grade 4 curriculum has been reviewed as a rigorous curriculum program that comprises instructional materials that adequately assess grade-level content, "reflect(s) the balances in the Standards," and helps "students meet the Standards' rigorous expectations" (Edreports.org, 2018). She rejected using the curriculum and continued using online resources (i.e., TPT, Prodigy, and Reflex Math) to supplement her mathematics curriculum. In her third year, the school-wide Google Drive was no longer available—a decision made by the school administration. For relational resources, she maintained productive relationships with her new 4th-grade teacher colleagues and the instructional coach.

How Resources Supported and Inhibited the Design of Units and Lessons

Both teachers utilized a variety of curriculum, instructional, and relational resources across their first three years of teaching. But how did these resources seem to influence the design of their mathematics units and lessons? What instructional materials and relationships appeared to be key in supporting or inhibiting the design of these units and lessons? In this study, we found that access to and utilization of a packaged curriculum seemed to influence both teachers' use of online resources. Further, it was clear that both teachers perceived their district-level mathematics coaches as key resources in helping to design mathematics units and lessons. Both teachers' grade-level colleagues supported unit and lesson planning as well.

Curriculum and Instructional Resources

In their first years of teaching, Ms. Scott indicated that she did not have access to a packaged curriculum, while Ms. Baker utilized Investigations 3 offered by her district. She relied on Investigations 3 as a framework for the curriculum and frequently used the packaged instructional materials that came with it. Both teachers indicated that they utilized online mathematics resources to augment their curriculum and instruction. For example, Ms. Scott used Pinterest to find lesson plans she thought would support her students' learning. In addition, Ms. Baker consistently used TPT to acquire unit and lesson

materials. When asked how she obtained the materials for the current unit she was teaching at the time, Ms. Baker stated: “I purchased it on TPT. It was an interactive notebook set that was specifically modeled after the [state standards] and I found that really helpful because it covered everything and I didn’t have to make the materials myself” (Interview 2, Year1). Thus, online resources were key in supplementing the existing packaged curriculum in the case of Ms. Baker and to fill a curriculum void in the case of Ms. Scott.

Ms. Baker also had access to a school-wide Google Drive that contained numerous curriculum and instructional resources for 3rd-grade mathematics. She utilized worksheets, PowerPoint slideshows for particular lessons, and sample lesson plans that other teachers had uploaded throughout the years. Lastly, both teachers also utilized instructional strategies from their respective teacher preparation programs. Ms. Baker indicated that she used her notes from her mathematics methods course and referred to them for lesson planning and instruction.

In their second years of teaching, Ms. Scott and Ms. Baker utilized much of the same resources to design their units and lessons. Ms. Scott changed grade levels (i.e., from 5th grade to 4th grade) and did not have access to a packaged curriculum for mathematics, while Ms. Baker continued teaching 3rd grade and used the same packaged curriculum (i.e., Investigations 3). Both teachers indicated that they still heavily relied on online resources to support their curriculum development and unit and lesson planning. For example, Ms. Scott began utilizing TPT. She stated: “We don’t have textbooks or a curriculum, so it’s really all my understanding of the standards and going out to find other resources. Like, I use Teachers-Pay-Teachers since I don’t have resources to pull from at school” (Year 2, Interview 1). Ms. Baker also used TPT to find specific lessons and materials, Kahn Academy to scaffold student learning of mathematical concepts, and the school-wide Google Drive to find lesson plan ideas and presentation materials. Ms. Scott also used instructional resources from her teacher preparation program, but Ms. Baker stated that she no longer used resources gathered from her respective program in her second year. This was a change from Ms. Baker’s first year of teaching where she used notes from her teacher preparation program to support her mathematics instruction.

In their third year of teaching, both teachers stated that they were offered packaged curricula. Ms. Baker made a grade-level change from 3rd grade to 4th grade and indicated that not having a curriculum was a challenge when designing her mathematics units. She stated:

We don't have a [packaged] curriculum. 3rd grade had a math curriculum, but 4th grade doesn't. So that's definitely one of the main struggles I'm facing moving to 4th grade. We're reinventing the wheel for every unit. We have nothing to go off of. (Interview 1, Year 3)

She was shortly thereafter offered a packaged curriculum (i.e., Eureka Math Grade 4) by her mathematics instructional coach, but “scrapped it” when she perceived that it “wasn't working” for her students and reiterated that she would continue relying on “online resources that are linked to the curriculum guide for the state standards like Prodigy and Reflex Math” (Interview 1, Year 3). In other words, she felt compelled to utilize various online resources to support her design of units and lessons. These online resources increased in her third year of teaching, including the addition of sample state assessment questions, a state department of education curriculum guide, Prodigy (i.e., a free online mathematics video game), and Reflex Math (i.e., an online mathematics fact recall game).

Ms. Scott was also offered a different packaged curriculum in her third year of teaching. After investigating this program (i.e., CueThink), we determined that it is not a packaged mathematics curriculum as Ms. Scott described it. It is, however, an online platform that attempts to teach students unique problem-solving skills and ways of thinking about mathematics. It is aligned with the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics, but the program does not appear to meet the characteristics typically representative of a curriculum (e.g., comprehensive learning goals, specifically-designed activities, teaching strategies, varied ongoing assessments, etc.). Nonetheless, she refused to use the program because she thought it would not support her students' learning. Thus, Ms. Scott, much like Ms. Baker, continued to rely on various online resources to support her design of units and lessons.

Across their first three years of teaching, both teachers believed that online resources were crucial in the design of units and lessons. They both believed their packaged curricula (whether they were actually curricula or not) were not entirely sufficient to meet their students' needs and, thus, needed to be

supplemented with online resources. In addition, both teachers utilized other resources to further augment their mathematics curriculum, including a school-wide Google Drive and notes derived from their teacher preparation programs.

Relational Resources. In her first year of teaching (2016-17), Ms. Baker indicated that her district-level mathematics instructional coach worked closely with the 3rd-grade teachers because it was the first year that students would take a state-mandated test in mathematics. Each week, the coach would meet with her professional learning community (PLC) to discuss lesson planning. Further, the coach found and created mathematics resources and put them on the school-wide Google Drive, but this was at times difficult to sift through for Ms. Baker. She described it as “overwhelming” to find materials, but that by the end of her first year she believed the Drive was important for her design of units and lessons. She also reported that her coach was easily reached for support, stating that if she needed him for support that she could “privately e-mail” him and “set something up” (Interview 2, Year 1). The coach consistently e-mailed the 3rd-grade teachers to ask “if we needed anything” or to “send us suggestions for what we should be doing” relative to mathematics instruction (Interview 2, Year 1). Lastly, the coach would frequently create 10 questions that mimicked SOL test questions that Ms. Baker would give students during each Friday mathematics lesson to assess their understanding of key mathematical concepts that are outlined in the state standards.

In her second year of teaching, Ms. Baker explained that the coach was an important part of her ability to access mathematics resources. She still utilized resources that the coach “found online or created himself” (Interview 1, Year 2). In other words, the relationship between Ms. Baker and coach appeared to be quite similar to her first year of teaching. However, this relationship dynamic was beginning to change, especially by her third year of teaching when the coach suggested a new packaged curriculum (i.e., Eureka Math Grade 4). She indicated that the curriculum did not best support her students’ learning needs and quickly stopped using it. Ms. Baker perceived that the instructional coach was not supporting her as an educator by the end of her third year of teaching, even going as far as stating: “The coach is all talk, no action. He says he wants to come in and work with small groups, but he never shows up. This will

probably be my last year here” (Interview 1, Year 3). It was significant for her to express such frustration with her coach and, at the same time, to question whether she would remain teaching. Clearly, this relationship waxed and waned across Ms. Baker’s first three years of teaching and, particularly in her third year, this relationship appeared to inhibit her utilization of mathematics resources for the design of units and lessons.

Ms. Scott met with her district-level mathematics instructional coach every other week for 30 minutes during her first year of teaching (2016-17). During these meetings, the coach would “come with lessons and supplies that we would need to teach [mathematics] lessons” (Interview 1, Year 1). The meetings were also helpful because the coach would review the current pacing guide and provide lesson planning ideas. Her relationship with her coach was clearly positive when it came to providing her with access to curriculum and instructional resources to support the design of units and lessons. The coach would not only meet with Ms. Scott every other week to support lesson planning but also to help her find differentiated word problems and other potential questions that students might experience on the end-of-the-year state test. By the end of her first year of teaching, the coach had even encouraged her to eventually become a mathematics instructional coach herself.

In Ms. Scott’s second year of teaching, the coach was not as present. She expressed she was unhappy with this situation, but this would quickly change at the start of her third year of teaching. At the beginning of her third year, the coach observed one of her mathematics lessons and suggested that a new packaged curriculum could help her with unit and lesson planning and support student learning. She told the coach, however, that she did not think this curriculum was appropriate for her students “but she got it for us and implemented it anyway” (Interview 2, Year 3). Ms. Scott stated that to implement such a curriculum “would require me to stop my actual teaching and teach them how to use the program. I don’t see that as being beneficial for my students” (Interview 2, Year 3). After observing a lesson where Ms. Scott implemented the curriculum, the coach offered feedback that caused her to be “standoffish” with regard to the idea of enacting the curriculum. Despite this seeming bump in the road between her and the

coach, she noted that the coach had otherwise been an important and supportive resource in her third year of teaching:

She's very positive and outgoing and believes similar to what I do. Like, putting the kids first and making sure they're getting what they need at the time they need it. She's helped me along the way with the instruction in my classroom.

By the end of her third year of teaching, she believed that the relationship with her coach was vital relative to her design of units and lessons, mainly because of the curriculum and instructional resources that the coach provided. Overall, both teachers' relationships with teacher colleagues and their coaches were key in accessing and utilizing the curriculum and instructional resources.

Teacher Colleagues

In her first and second years of teaching, Ms. Scott did not work with other teacher colleagues on developing units and lessons. However, she did work with a number of teacher colleagues on other professional activities and successfully maintained these relationships across her first two years of teaching. In her third year of teaching, her school administration expected the 3rd-, 4th-, and 5th-grade teachers to plan assessments together. For the first time, she worked with her teacher colleagues to develop mathematics assessments and discussed how these assessments would fit into units and lessons. Overall, she rarely relied on teacher colleagues to support her design of units and lessons across her first three years of teaching.

In contrast, Ms. Baker reported that her relationships with her grade-level teacher colleagues, particularly in her third year of teaching, were helpful in designing units and lessons. This was because she was moved from teaching 3rd-grade mathematics to 4th grade. She described working with the 3rd-grade teachers as "uncomfortable" due to an experience and age gap (Interview 1, Year 1). In her third year of teaching, however, she enjoyed working with her colleagues "a lot more this year than the past two years" (Interview 1, Year 3). This was mainly due to the 4th-grade team's willingness to support each other with instructional resources and to plan lessons each week. Thus, in her third year, she appeared to

have stronger relationships with her teacher colleagues compared to Ms. Scott. Ms. Baker claimed that her teacher colleagues directly supported her design of mathematics units and lessons.

School principals

Ms. Scott described her relationship with her school principal as challenging and one that rarely supported her mathematics instruction. Across her first three years of teaching, she consistently described her relationship with her principal through her teacher evaluation experiences. In her first year of teaching, she explained that she shared similar beliefs with her principal about teaching. However, when formally observed by her principal, she did not find the feedback to be particularly supportive of designing higher-quality mathematics lessons. When the principal suggested using more high-level questions that could lead to more than one answer, Ms. Scott explained that, in elementary mathematics, most problems will have one answer. She further explained: “You can get to that answer in different ways, but this problem has one correct answer” (Interview 1, Year 1). She emphasized that she would have rather had feedback on the different methods to find an answer. Her frustration continued into her second and third years of teaching.

In her second and third years of teaching, Ms. Scott described not receiving the level of constructive feedback and instructional support from her principal that she hoped for. In her first year, she explained how her beliefs about teaching were similar to her principal’s beliefs. But, in her second year, she reported that she did not think they were similar after all. She wished the principal “would be out [of her office] so that the kids would know who she is and that she’d be helpful to people in the building” (Interview 1, Year 2). In her third year of teaching, the principal offered advice about how to structure mathematics lessons with small groups. Ms. Scott indicated that she believed her small groups were too chatty and saw it as a classroom management issue, while her principal referred to the chattiness as “productive noise” (Interview 1, Year 3). She indicated that not seeing eye-to-eye when it came to mathematics teaching was a challenge and made designing specific lessons particularly difficult.

Ms. Baker also described her relationship with her school principal as challenging across her first three years of teaching. In contrast to Ms. Scott, she described her challenging relationship with her

principal as one grounded in pressure to increase mathematics test scores with little feedback related to mathematics instruction. This was the case throughout her first and second years of teaching and became truly evident in her third year of teaching. She explained how her principal expected 80 percent student growth in mathematics from the beginning to the end of the school year; she felt that this goal might be feasible, but would be difficult to achieve. In other words, she expressed doubts about the principal's expectations regarding student growth. When asked if her principal's expectations matched her own, she stated: "They're not super well-matched" and that the principal does not consider each teacher's student population (Interview 1, Year 3).

Ms. Baker indicated that her principal rarely provided constructive feedback to ensure an increase in test scores. She perceived a lack of competence regarding the principal's expectation for student growth and their lack of communication. The lack of competence was clear in that the principal never formally observed her in order to provide instructional feedback. Thus, it makes sense that she felt that her expectations for mathematics instruction and her principal's expectations were not aligned. It was also clear that she perceived a lack of integrity in her relationship with her principal. For example, the principal expected 80 percent student growth, but she was never formally observed nor received feedback to improve instruction or achieve the expected growth percentages. Thus, there was inconsistency between what the principal wanted—increased student growth—and what they did, or in this case, did not do; that is, they failed to provide feedback on Ms. Baker's mathematics instruction. In the last interview, she simply stated: "I love my school and my kids and I love the people I work with. It's just the administration; there's no support. There would have to be a drastic change for me to feel like I want to stay" (Interview 1, Year 3). In conclusion, it was clear that the relationships that both teachers maintained with their principals inhibited their design of mathematics and units. These relationships appeared to engender challenges and led them to question their principals' roles and the consistency between what their principals said versus what they did.

Trust Relations and Teacher Agency

Both teachers maintained specific relationships within their school communities, which influenced their access to curriculum and instructional resources and either supported or inhibited their design of mathematics units and lessons. In addition to these findings, we also found that Ms. Scott maintained a stronger relationship with her district-level mathematics instructional coach and exhibited a clearer sense of agency when navigating her relationships compared to Ms. Baker. These differences appeared most evidently when each teacher described particular circumstances where they used their professional knowledge and experiences, interacted with specific social actors and materials within their environments, and made decisions based on their aspirations for their mathematics teaching.

Ms. Scott

Ms. Scott perceived her relationship with her coach as one that was important for her mathematics instruction across her first three years of teaching. She often saw and worked with her coach during planning meetings that took place bi-weekly for 30 minutes. These frequent meetings with the same coach continued across her first three years of teaching. Her coach worked closely with her on lesson planning, unit design, and utilizing varying curriculum and instructional resources to support the teaching of mathematics. She largely perceived that her coach did their job well and consistently reaffirmed what they were going to do to help her mathematics instruction.

In her first year of teaching, Ms. Scott's coach told her that she would need to start teaching her students in small groups. The instructional coach also told her that she should enact the Math Daily 3 method (i.e., students work with peers, students work by themselves, and students engage in writing related to mathematics). Ms. Scott expressed concern about dividing her classes into groups of three versus groups of four and her concerns appeared to be based on that she had never "been in a classroom that effectively used the daily three rotation" (Interview 1, Year 1). Despite her concerns, she and her coach worked together during their frequent meeting times and found a way to do four rotations "to make sure that when the students are coming to my small-group table, I have enough time to work with them to make it meaningful" (Interview 1, Year 1) Thus, Ms. Scott and the coach agreed upon a modified way of

incorporating the new method—four groups that rotated twice per class so that she would have more time with each group. This extra time was important so she could have ample time to assess students. Such a change to her instructional practices and the way in which she designed her lessons was a major concern for her. Yet, with consistent communication, her coach was willing to work out a different method that would work for her and her students.

This situation also appeared to be an example of Ms. Scott exerting teacher agency. She had not previously enacted such a method and relied on her existing social structures (i.e., her coach) to express her concerns about it. Even as a first-year teacher, she advocated for a modified version of the method so that she could maintain the one-on-one student time she perceived as vital to her teaching. It seemed to be the case that her relationship with her coach enabled her to exert agency to make informed instructional decisions. The coach was one of the key actors within her social environment across her first three years of teaching.

In her third year of teaching, Ms. Scott was offered a new mathematics program (i.e., CueThink) that her coach suggested she use. After a review of the program, she thought it was not suitable for her students and she preferred not to use it. The coach, however, still went ahead and asked all teachers teaching mathematics to utilize the program. Ms. Scott explained how she contacted her coach and said “I don’t think my students are there yet,” because some of her students are “on a first-grade level who can barely read the problem” (Interview 1, Year 3). She utilized the program for only a short time before she stopped. She thought the program lacked information for her students to solve word problems and had little “faith” in the program overall (Interview 1, Year 3). This situation created a tension between Ms. Scott and her coach where she perceived a breakdown of integrity—where the coach went ahead and asked her to use the program despite her perceptions of it. But, it was clear that she also perceived her coach as competent and trustworthy. In the same interview where she expressed her concerns about using the new program, she also explained how her coach thought similarly to her when it came to supporting students and that the coach had helped her with instruction a number of times across the years (Interview 1, Year 3).

This tension between Ms. Scott and her coach indicates another example of teacher agency. The first example appeared to be one where the coach acted as a key factor in her social environment, particularly with her decisions about enacting new instructional practices. This current situation, however, seems to be a case where the coach remains a key social factor, but as a factor in navigating a material environment where a new mathematics program is reviewed and utilized. She responds to the coach's expectations of utilizing this new program with a great sense of agency by navigating conversations with her coach, the coach's expectations, her understanding of her students' readiness to learn in a new way, and the potential student outcomes if she were to adopt the new program. In the end, she decided to not use the new program, which was a decision in direct opposition to her coach. It may be the case that since her first year of teaching, she felt enabled to make her own decisions regarding her teaching and it appears that the coach was a key actor in enabling that. Overall, she maintained a strong relationship with her coach that was grounded in competence and integrity and one in which she perceived a high degree of her own agency.

Ms. Baker

Similar to Ms. Scott, Ms. Baker perceived her relationship with her coach as important for her access to curriculum and instructional resources across her first three years of teaching. However, she also made clear that her relationship with the coach was difficult at various times, especially by the end of her third year of teaching. In her first two years of teaching, she used the packaged curriculum (i.e., Investigations 3) that her coach suggested she use. Overall, she found the curriculum useful, but not entirely sufficient. She consistently sought to use the school-wide Google Drive; the coach strongly influenced the types of resources that were uploaded to this Drive. She perceived the Drive to be helpful at times, but also disorganized and not particularly targeted to 3rd-grade mathematics. Further, in her third year of teaching, she and her coach disagreed about the packaged curriculum and its usefulness regarding the teaching of mathematics. Without consulting her coach, she stopped using the curriculum and instead relied on the online resources. In other words, she relied on the competence of her coach to provide

specific resources. But, when these resources were not to her liking, she exerted her agency to use online resources to support her students' learning in mathematics.

As mentioned, Ms. Baker's relationship with her coach was challenging at different times across her three years of teaching, especially when she perceived a lack of support with obtaining quality instructional resources and with the design of units and lessons. It was clear that within her school environment, she struggled with trusting her relationships with her principal and coach. She also only had access to packaged curricula that were either reviewed as lacking mathematical coherence and focus or deemed to be too rigorous. Lastly, because of these challenges with school leader relationships and access to quality curriculum and instructional resources, her sense of agency appeared to not be as enabled compared to Ms. Scott.

Based on their first year of teaching PLATO mathematics scores, Ms. Baker fell below the mean of the distribution of teachers ($n = 38$), while Ms. Scott ranked well above the mean. Ms. Baker was clearly in a school environment where a number of factors prevented her from accessing quality instructional resources and hindered her sense of agency. It could very well be the case that these factors shed light on Ms. Baker's PLATO mathematics scores relative to Ms. Scott's. Regarding mathematics content knowledge (MCK) data, Ms. Baker substantially outperformed Ms. Scott after their first year of teaching on a survey measure of MCK. In addition, based on survey-based mathematical knowledge for teaching (MKT) data, Ms. Baker's scores continually increased from when she first took the MKT survey in her elementary teacher candidate year to her second year of teaching. Ms. Scott's MKT scores remained at the same level and above mean across the same time.

These observation and survey data align with both teachers' descriptions of their first three years of teaching. For example, Ms. Baker consistently described challenges that may be reflected in these data. It may be the case that although Ms. Baker had access to the Investigations 3 curriculum for grade 3 in her first two years of teaching, her utilization of this curriculum may not have supported her mathematics instruction. Further, because Ms. Baker deemed the Eureka Math curriculum to be too rigorous and refused to use it in her third year, she did not receive support from her instructional coach, who was

hoping she would use the curriculum. For these reasons, it makes sense that Ms. Baker's PLATO scores would fall below the mean, while Ms. Scott—who had sufficient relational, curriculum, and instructional resources across her first three years—would fall above.

Discussion

We found that both teachers used a variety of curriculum, instructional, and relational resources across their first three years of teaching and these resources both supported and inhibited their design of mathematics units and lessons. The relationships that each teacher maintained with their coaches and teacher colleagues also supported and inhibited their design as well. Ms. Scott maintained a stronger relationship with her coach and exerted a clear sense of agency compared to Ms. Baker. The differences in agency were grounded in how each teacher described circumstances where they utilized their professional knowledge and experience, interacted with specific individuals and materials within their environments, and made decisions based on the curriculum they aspired to teach. The observation data also aligned with both teachers' descriptions of their first three years of teaching and shed light on the challenges they faced, differences in how they utilized resources, and differences in their experiences. In this section, we discuss how our findings align with prior research that demonstrates how more dynamic and trusting relationships seem to influence access to resources and enable agency.

Research indicates that principals who are knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction can act alongside other school leaders (e.g., instructional coaches, grade-team leaders, etc.) and teachers to acquire instructional resources and support subject-specific instruction (Spillane et al., 2001). In addition, increasing teachers' trust in school leaders may be beneficial for a school's climate, but could potentially be a less straightforward approach to refining classroom practice. Our findings suggest that stronger trust ties between beginning teachers and their school leaders may support their acquisition of curriculum and instructional resources that help with their design of units and lessons. Thus, our findings align with other research (Camburn, 2010; Coburn & Russell, 2008) that found that when instructional coaches support teacher learning with frequent collaboration, changes are likely to occur in classroom instruction and curriculum implementation.

Our study also aligns with prior research that shows that teacher collaboration is a key factor in supporting beginning teachers and that school leaders are important players in maintaining productive professional cultures (Kardos et al., 2001). Both teachers in our study experienced varied relationships with their instructional coaches. Ms. Scott's relationship with her coach appeared to wax and wane over her first three years of teaching, while Ms. Baker rarely experienced a productive level of collaboration with her coach compared to Ms. Scott. What was particularly interesting was that both teachers experienced diminished relationships with their respective coaches by their third year of teaching. This finding is more in line with previous research by Lane and Sweeny (2019) who found that third- and fourth-year teachers perceived both strong and weak ties with their instructional coaches depending on how the teachers exerted agency within such relationships. Our study considers how relational trust and teacher agency may affect these relationships and our data indicates that teachers are best supported to exert their agency when they have acquired useful curriculum and instructional resources and have developed more positive relationships with school leaders. These social and material aspects seemed to enable Ms. Scott's agency more so than Ms. Baker. Based on the work of Biesta et al. (2015), it is clear that both teachers were granted a fair amount of teacher autonomy, yet Ms. Scott exerted a greater sense of agency. Ms. Baker did indeed make distinct choices (e.g., when she refused to use her packaged curriculum), but within her school environment she lacked relational resources (i.e., an available instructional coach), which may have influenced her ability to enable her agency.

Our study suggests that beginning upper elementary mathematics teachers can engender stronger trust and agency when school leaders are more collaborative and offer useful curriculum and instructional resources. In other words, teachers' resources matter a great deal when it comes to their design of curriculum and instruction. When teachers do not perceive helpful relationships with the instructional coaches, they may supplement their curriculum with online resources. It could be the case that teachers do this for a variety of reasons. In our study, the teachers largely did this because they did not find the district-recommended curricula to be supportive of their students' learning needs, which stemmed from a lack of competence and integrity on the part of their instructional coaches. More research should consider

the importance of relationship building in teachers' first years of teaching, as it appears these bonds can affect how teachers design their units and lessons.

Conclusion

This study raises questions about how best school leaders (i.e., principals and coaches) can support beginning teachers with the acquisition of curriculum and instructional resources. In each case, it appeared that stronger ties between the teacher and school leader resulted in what the teacher perceived as more useful resources for their design of units and lessons. It also seemed that the teachers' sense of agency was key in maintaining relationships and choosing to use particular curriculum resources. Future research should consider investigating how school leaders can support beginning teachers with larger and more varied samples of teachers and school leaders. Cross-case comparisons could further elucidate the characteristics of strong, trusting relationships from which teachers appear to obtain more useful resources. In addition, such research could explore whether the resources obtained from trusting relationships are indeed higher-quality or perhaps if strong relationships between teachers and school leaders only engender perceptions of more useful resources. Lastly, future research should continue to consider how to build beginning teachers agency and how they best can enable it within differing institutional settings.

More research is also needed on beginning teachers and their teacher agency across subject-areas and grade-levels. Our study offers unique insights about beginning upper elementary mathematics teachers' access to instructional resources, capacity to enhance curriculum, their agency in making instructional decisions, and how they socially engage with key leaders within their school communities. But what would we have found if our participants were beginning middle and high school mathematics teachers? We suspect that teachers' school leader relationships may look quite different and affect teachers' design of curriculum in different ways. Our study may also have implications for teacher preparation programs and how to prepare beginning teachers in their quest to find and utilize curriculum resources to design mathematics curricula. More research could shed light on how teacher preparation coursework is structured to teach pre-service teachers how to build trusting relationships with school

leaders in their first years of teaching. Based on our findings, it seems more than reasonable to investigate the ways in which pre-service teachers acquire knowledge about how to foster relationships with school leaders and teacher colleagues. Lastly, more research is needed on how teacher colleagues and grade-level teams can create environments where curriculum and instructional resources are shared for teaching support. Perhaps high-quality collaboration among teacher colleagues could create opportunities for beginning teachers to acquire useful resources and to become less reliant on district-level instructional coaches.

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Appendix A

Table 1

Study Participants (2016-2018)

Name	School	Grades Taught	Sections of Mathematics Across Three Years
Ms. Baker	Clayton Elementary School	Year 1—3 rd grade Year 2—3 rd grade Year 3—4 th grade	Year 1—2 sections Year 2—2 sections Year 3—2 sections
Ms. Scott	Boynton Elementary School	Year 1—5 th grade Year 2—4 th grade Year 3—4 th grade	Year 1—3 sections Year 2—3 sections Year 3—4 sections

Table 2

School Demographics (2017-2018)

	Clayton Elementary	Boynton Elementary
White	381 (71.6%)	208 (73.2%)
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Hispanic	34 (6.4%)	32 (11.3%)
Black	74 (13.9%)	8 (2.8%)
Asian	0 (0%)	2 (0.7%)
American Indian/Alaska Native	1 (0.2%)	0 (0%)
Multi-racial	42 (7.9%)	34 (12%)
Females	271 (50.9%)	140 (49%)
Males	261 (49.1%)	144 (51%)
Total School Enrollment	532	284
Free Lunch Eligible	158 (29.7%)	71 (25%)
Reduced-price Lunch Eligible	37 (7%)	19 (6.7%)

Table 3

Initial and Final Codes

Initial Codes	Final Codes
Resources	Resources
Challenges	Challenges
Administration (District-level and school-level)	Administration (District-level and school-level)
	References to Mathematics Content
	Instructional Activities

Appendix B**2016-2018 Upper Elementary Mathematics Teacher Interview Questions***First Interview, Fall 2016, Year 1*

1. Please describe your current teaching position and any other required responsibilities you have at your school.
2. Please briefly describe your classroom and school context.
3. Please describe the mathematics curricula at your school and in your district. How were you instructed to use these curricula? What curricula resources were you given?
4. How are you learning to implement the mathematics curricula at your school?
5. What resources are available in your school or district to help you teach mathematics? Which have you used?
6. What from your teacher preparation experience has been most helpful to you so far? What have you used from your teacher preparation program to assist you with instruction? Provide an example.
7. What has been challenging for you so far this year? Please describe how you navigated through one of your challenges? Are there supports that you wish you would have had that you didn't have?
8. What have you heard about teacher evaluation in your district or school? What are your thoughts and your experiences with that thus far?
9. Is there anything that we didn't talk about that you would like to share?

Second Interview, Spring 2017, Year 1

1. Please describe the students in your mathematics classroom. Have your views of your students changed since the beginning of the school year? If so, how? What influenced these changes?
2. How do the views you hold of your students influence your mathematics instruction?
3. How would you describe the expectations in your school regarding mathematics instruction?
4. Can you describe a recent unit in mathematics that you taught? This could also be the unit you are currently teaching. What resources did you draw upon to design this unit? Were any of these resources from your teacher preparation program? From mentors, principals, coaches or other teachers at your school?
5. Can you describe a recent lesson within this unit? This could also be the lesson we recently observed. What resources did you draw upon to design this lesson? Were any of these resources

from your teacher preparation program? From mentors, principals, coaches or other teachers at your school?

6. What principles or beliefs guide your language arts instruction? What influences/has influenced these guiding principles or beliefs?
7. How do you assess your students in mathematics? What resources do you draw upon to identify or design these assessments? Are any of these resources from your teacher preparation program? From mentors, principals, coaches or other teachers at your school?
8. Have you received feedback on your mathematics instruction? If so, what kind of feedback have you received and from whom? Has this feedback influenced your instruction? If so, how? If not, why not?
9. Is there anything that we didn't talk about that you would like to share?

Third Interview, Spring 2017, Year 1

1. Can you describe a recent unit in mathematics that you taught? This could also be the unit you are currently teaching. What resources did you draw upon to design this unit? Were any of these resources from your teacher preparation program? From mentors, principals, coaches or other teachers at your school?
2. Can you describe a recent lesson within this unit? This could also be the lesson we recently observed. What resources did you draw upon to design this lesson? Were any of these resources from your teacher preparation program? From mentors, principals, coaches or other teachers at your school?
3. Every school has stakeholders (i.e., people external to a school who have an interest in its operations) who may influence the work of educating students (e.g., parents, parent/teacher organizations, teachers union, school board, government officials, local businesses, non-profit organizations, etc.) To what extent do these stakeholders influence your teaching?
4. What do you know about the history of your school and/or the larger community? Can you provide any examples of substantial changes in your school and/or community context? To what extent do these changes influence your teaching?
5. To what extent do education policies at the national, state, or local levels influence your teaching?
6. How would you describe your "fit" at this school? How do your beliefs or principles about teaching align with those of your administrators and colleagues? Do your instructional approaches differ from those of your colleagues? If so, how? To what extent do you share similar professional interests or goals with your colleagues?

7. Please provide an example of recent feedback you received about your teaching. Who provided the feedback? What was the content of the discussion? Did the feedback align with your own beliefs or principles about teaching? In what ways did you view the feedback as valuable? How did the feedback influence your instruction, if at all?
8. To what extent is your current position consistent with your career teaching plans? At this point, do you see yourself remaining in the teaching profession in the short term? Long term? If so, do you see yourself teaching in this school/community? If not, why not?

First Interview, Spring 2018, Year 2

1. When did you receive your job placement this year?
2. Please describe the students in your mathematics classroom. Have your views of your students changed since the beginning of the school year? If so, how? What influenced these changes?
3. How do the views you hold of your students influence your mathematics instruction?
4. How would you describe the expectations in your school regarding mathematics instruction?
5. Can you describe a recent unit in mathematics that you taught? This could also be the unit you are currently teaching. What resources did you draw upon to design this unit? Were any of these resources from your teacher preparation program? From mentors, principals, coaches or other teachers at your school?
6. Can you describe a recent lesson within this unit? This could also be the lesson we recently observed. What resources did you draw upon to design this lesson? Were any of these resources from your teacher preparation program? From mentors, principals, coaches or other teachers at your school?
7. What principles or beliefs guide your mathematics instruction? What influences/has influenced these guiding principles or beliefs?
8. How do you assess your students in mathematics? What resources do you draw upon to identify or design these assessments? Are any of these resources from your teacher preparation program? From mentors, principals, coaches or other teachers at your school?
9. Have you received feedback on your mathematics instruction? If so, what kind of feedback have you received and from whom? Has this feedback influenced your instruction? If so, how? If not, why not?
10. How would you describe your “fit” at this school? How do your beliefs or principles about teaching align with those of your administrators and colleagues? Do your instructional approaches differ from those of your colleagues? If so, how? To what extent do you share similar professional interests or goals with your colleagues?

11. To what extent is your current position consistent with your career teaching plans? At this point, do you see yourself remaining in the teaching profession in the short term? Long term? If so, do you see yourself teaching in this school/community? If not, why not?
12. Is there anything that we didn't talk about that you would like to share?

First Interview, Fall 2018, Year 3

1. When did you receive your job placement this year?
2. Have your views of your students changed since the beginning of the school year?
3. How do your views of your students influence your math instruction as a whole?
4. How would you describe the expectations in your school regarding math instruction?
5. Can you describe a recent unit in math?
6. Can you describe a recent lesson within the unit?
7. What principles or beliefs guide your math instruction?
8. How do you assess your students in math?
9. Have you received feedback on your language arts instruction?
10. What interactions have you had with your principal over the past month?
11. How would you describe your fit at the school with colleagues?
12. Do your beliefs about math instruction align with your colleagues?
13. To what extent is your current position consistent with your career teaching plans? Do you see yourself remaining in the teaching profession in the short term and in the long term?