Christopher C. Martell | Clinical Assistant Professor of Social Studies Education

RESEARCH PROGRAM
Longitudinal Analysis of the Development of Elementary History Teachers

In school, history has been traditionally presented as a fixed story to be learned and then retold. Additionally, this fixed story is usually told from a White or Euro-centric perspective. Presenting history in this way not only ignores the process of inquiry that is used to create and recreate history and neglects the histories of people of color, but it also results in a history curriculum that is not engaging for most students. Over the last 30 years, there has been a push to increase inquiry-based history instruction and redesign the history curriculum to include the voices of marginalized groups. Yet, there is currently a limited understanding of how we can prepare elementary teachers to be culturally relevant teachers and use inquiry-based instructional methods in their history classrooms. This is exacerbated by the fact that relatively few studies on learning to teach social studies are longitudinal in nature (and none examine history teachers at the elementary-level). If we want to know the true impact of teacher preparation programs, we must continue to study what happens to teachers after they enter their own classrooms.

This research program investigates the development of elementary history teachers’ beliefs and related practices over time, with the goal of improving elementary teacher preparation and subsequently student learning in history. The first series of studies will examine teachers’ development of inquiry-based instruction. This is pertinent to the recently released Common Core State Standards and C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards, which emphasize argumentation and making evidence-based claims. The second series of studies will examine teachers’ incorporation (or lack thereof) of race in the history curriculum. There is a growing body of research that shows the positive results of culturally relevant teaching on all students, and particularly on students of color. This research aims to illuminate elementary teachers successes and struggles as they make sense of teaching about race in their history classrooms.

Biographical Sketch
Christopher C. Martell, Ed.D., is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Social Studies in the Elementary Education Program, where his research focuses on the development of social studies teachers’ beliefs and practices. Dr. Martell’s recent research projects have examined social studies teacher education through longitudinal studies and the role of race and ethnicity in the history classroom. He is also interested in teacher action research and practitioner inquiry. For eleven years, he taught high school social studies in urban and suburban contexts. He is currently the Program Chair of the Teacher as Researcher Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association, a member of the College and University Faculty Assembly of the National Council for the Social Studies, and the American Historical Association. Dr. Martell’s research and scholarly work has been featured in Theory and Research in Social Education, The Journal of Social Studies Research, Social Education, The Teacher Educator, and the edited book, The New Politics of the Textbook: Critical Analysis in the Core Content Areas.