

The Oral History for Citizenship Education

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Abstract

To address the need for social studies methods course instructors to help preservice teachers make learning and teaching citizenship education relevant, a qualitative case study that took on a content and thematic data analysis approach involving supplementing the curriculum with an oral history inquiry-based project was conducted on 38 elementary preservice teachers in a South Florida university's social studies methods course. By conducting an oral history with community members who shared first-hand knowledge and experience of past to present issues and events, preservice teachers were able to explore social and political realities (often deemed as controversial) through human perspective in dialogue and express how their interviewee's stories impacted their knowledge of the topic, own lives, and future teaching of citizenship education. Through the voices of community members (primary sources), participants were able to recognize and fill the gaps that exist in textbook narratives. Though participants focused on events and issues that showcased local community citizens' lived experiences, the topics were representative of what global citizens experience. As elementary preservice teachers help build the foundation of civic engagement for their future students, the oral history is an example of an endeavor that allowed participants to gain real-world citizenship education.

Keywords: *Community civic engagement, elementary preservice teachers, Inquiry-based citizenship project, oral history, social studies-citizenship education*

Introduction

Citizenship education is a vital component of the United States' social studies curriculum. Based on its connection to democracy, past to present events and issues, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens, citizenship encompasses a humanistic and pedagogical approach to teaching history, government, geography, law, sociology, and economics, as well as promoting civic engagement. Since the inception of social studies during the early 1900s, educational leaders have advocated that civic competency is the underlying goal of social studies; therefore, educators who teach social studies have been given the task of developing students' civic and democratic competence.

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As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, an increase in social and political mayhem (e.g., government policies, immigration, and inequalities), and legislation prohibiting what teachers can say (no contentious topics), read (no banned books), and teach (no culturally responsive teaching), social studies educators are filled with fear when faced with these instructional dilemmas. Schools play a major role in teaching citizenship; however, the curriculum that is presently taught in elementary and middle schools is not scoring well. As the National Assessment for Educational Progress (2024) reported, in states that require an 8th grade civics examination related to the concepts of democracy, government, and citizenry, it was determined that nearly 80% of students lacked proficiency: the lowest number since 1994 when the assessment was first created. Though the pandemic may have contributed to this decrease, since social studies has progressively marginalized in elementary classrooms due to the prioritization of high-stakes tested subjects such as reading and mathematics, the time spent teaching citizenship in elementary grades, which scaffolds concepts for middle schoolers, has dwindled, often to the point where “citizenship education never happens” (Misco & Tseng, 2018, p. 8).

Literature Review

Citizenship’s Confusion

University social studies education programs aim for preservice teachers (referred to as PSTs in this paper) to attain the knowledge and skills needed to teach citizenship, and, in turn, to develop well-informed and participatory citizenry (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2024); however, as Haverback’s (2017) research concluded, PSTs who enter their teacher training often bring little to no experience with them when teaching social studies, particularly citizenship. To typify, elementary PSTs often presume that citizenship is solely about patriotism (Cetiner & Simsir, 2023) or mistaken it for character education (i.e., developing good manners) (Gustina, 2024).

PSTs’ preconceived notions about teaching may also be due to how they were taught during their prior schooling. For instance, Andersson (2020) found that although PSTs were eager to create new materials to teach citizenship, they created them in a way they believed was the best way to teach; thus, PSTs did not want to change their previous teachers’ teaching practices.

Given that citizenship can be difficult to teach when its principles are misinterpreted and preconceived notions abound, there may be consequences for PSTs’ future instruction. It is

important that education courses support PSTs in helping them find new ways to teach citizenship. One such method is the oral history. Although oral histories are not new, little attention has been given to how this practice might serve as an inquiry-based teaching strategy to learn citizenship, teach difficult topics, and interact with the community.

As many states' teacher education competencies require that PSTs demonstrate an understanding of citizenship by collaborating with the community to support their learning (Florida Department of State, 2023), it was believed that the oral history, a project that consists of an interviewer (a PST who asks questions) and an interviewee (a community member who responds to questions), could assist elementary PSTs in gaining the additional support they need. As such, the study aimed to examine how an oral history could benefit PSTs' learning and teaching of citizenship by discovering how the project impacted their knowledge, personal lives, and future teaching.

Relevance

John Dewey (1928), an early 1900 educational theorist, contended that schools were essential in creating a curriculum framework that could prepare students to be citizens, learn how to problem solve societal ills, and help maintain democracy; through the help of teacher educators, PSTs could go beyond teaching traditional methods (i.e., lecture) and practice experiential learning, where students *do* citizenship and understand how the past impacts the present. Rather than require the memorization of facts, educationalist Harold Rugg (1939) long insisted that when social education is infused in citizenship, students will gain interest when realizing they are a part of a curriculum of humanity. Rather than turn out students who do not understand "life as it is actually lived," education must be more about "the problems of our people" (Rugg, 1939, p. 141).

Although holding a civic-minded ideology is all-encompassing, since students tend to view social studies as boring, historically distant, and fact-based, the subject has become "cold, calculated, rational, and, above all, devoid of. . . discussion" (Lintner, 2018, p. 17). Nora E. H. Mathe's (2020) study found that PSTs lacked an understanding of democracy, how it could be taught, and which materials to use. This may be due to students having only been taught the basic knowledge needed to score well on exams. As Christine Sleeter (2018) noted when first teaching:

The main teaching tools I brought were lecturing . . . and assigning papers. It did not take long for me to realize that, from the students' point of view, their task was to give me

back what they believed I expected to hear. After all, I would be grading them . . . I realized I needed to change my approach. (p. 19)

Since teaching about real life often consists of topics deemed as controversial and difficult to teach, PSTs will need strategies that can assist them in accomplishing these educators' aspirations.

Why an Oral History?

Oral histories have been conducted for centuries; from cave paintings to spoken stories, people have preserved life's events through various forms of documentation. Thucydides, an ancient Greek historian who interviewed people on both sides of the Peloponnesian War, detailed the social and political forces that triggered the war and were taking place in the city-state of Athens (Doak, 2007). However, since historical interpretations are built under certain stances and altered by the media to adapt to a wider audience, then what constitutes as truth? Can individuals who share the same experience but hold different views be regarded as delivering the truth?

According to Friedrich W. Nietzsche (as cited in Law, 2007), truth is a matter of perspectivism. It is those who bear witness to an occurrence that enable us to recognize the "other side of the story" (Sanchez, 2017, p. 52). Theorist Lev Vygotsky (as cited in Saleen, et al., 2021, p. 403), whose social constructionism theory focused on how students learn best when allowed to construct facts on their own (not taught by the teacher), insisted that this new knowledge should be regarded as truth since "each of us invents our universe based on our impressions of reality." Moreover, "there are no criteria to discover the truth or to distinguish the true from the false" (Travasaros, 2024, p. 195).

Similar to ancient and recent testimonies, it was anticipated that by conducting oral histories with community members, PSTs could gain an awareness of events and issues through others' lived experiences.

Dialogue

Central to democracy is dialogue, where students exchange ideas through discussion. Educational philosopher Paulo Freire (2021, originally published in 1974), noted for his theory on critical consciousness, expressed how dialogue has the power to offer students an understanding of cultural oppression, raise students' consciousness of societal ills, and inspire students to take action.

With today's classrooms consisting of diverse students, it is important for students to interact and converse with others who hold different views about real-life issues. Sleeter (2018) expressed how group discussions on topics such as discrimination can positively influence students' understanding, however, "facilitating that dialogue is difficult emotional work that many people do not learn to do well. I was not born knowing how to do it myself . . . I had to learn" (p. 20).

Controversial Topics

Parallel to Dewey's principles (1928), Rugg (1939) asserted that teachers should apply real-world issues to the citizenship curriculum, since after all, social studies is the study of people. Since "people and the complex problems with which they are confronted play strategic . . . roles [in] modern culture," social studies could be viewed as "Man and His Changing Society . . . thus emphasizing the idea that it is the whole civilization" (Rugg, p. 149).

Although contentious topics can foster meaningful dialogue, reflection, and civic action – valuable outcomes for both students and society, since the teaching of controversial topics has been bombarded with moral and pedagogical obstacles, they are often avoided in teacher preparation courses (Marri et al., 2014). PSTs might be confused as to how they can teach the realism of society in the face of their fear of negative repercussions. This does not mean that PSTs must diverge from the set curriculum in rebellion. Instead, it is about finding a way to avoid saying, "I can't believe I said that" (Magill, 2023, p. 1). It appears that through oral history, an inquiry-based project, contentious topics can be well articulated through human sources of information.

Inquiry

When students engage in an inquiry-based practice, they take on a student-centered approach by conducting an investigation, formulating questions, analyzing evidence from authentic sources, applying content knowledge to the results, and reflecting on what is learned (NCSS, 2024). Since what is gained from an inquiry depends on what is asked, it is important that questions be open-ended to evoke higher-order responses rather than closed-ended questions that offer limited responses. Asli A. Akcali's (2023) study revealed that PSTs tend to ask "leading questions," or questions that include the answer (p. 316). Yet, as Bayraktar and Yalcin (2019) determined, PSTs often find it difficult to ask higher-level questions due to their inexperience and, therefore, lean on asking lower-level questions.

This correlates with how questioning skills are often not taught in social studies methods courses (Crowe & Stanford, 2010) and inquiries are rarely assigned (McParker, 2023). As questioning has the potential to impart knowledge, it was thought that the oral history project might serve as a way for PSTs to learn questioning skills and practice inquiry-based instruction.

Integration

Social studies' inquiry-based projects have a natural ability to weave disciplinary concepts into citizenship topics. For example, for an intradisciplinary inquiry on the topic of citizens' rights and responsibilities, the framework can include history (change over time), geography (people and places), culture (individuals and groups), and government (politics) (NCSS, 2024).

Citizenship can also be taught through an interdisciplinary approach, or with a blend of other subjects. For instance, when teachers of social studies, art, and music collaborated on a project regarding the history of railroads from an African American retired railroad worker's view, Maher (2004) found that students were able to recognize the societal factors that impacted workers' rights during a segregated era. As another example, Valk and Edwald (2017) highlighted a community project that involved the collaboration of students, instructors of various subjects, and a community arts program, which resulted in the restoration of a historic yet contaminated community pond.

By far, English language arts offers a plethora of opportunities to engage students in inquiries that focus on controversial topics. As Emerson (2018) explained, 5th-grade students who read a book that included discomfiting themes were able to connect to the main character's culture, place, and life events; moreover, the book helped alleviate the teacher's uneasiness in teaching these worrisome issues on their own. Educators, too, who engaged in writing, discussing, and reflecting on their beliefs and attitudes on the topic of racism, found that this critical examination helped increase their understanding of racial literacy (Lammert, 2024).

Though citizenship can successfully be taught through disciplinary blends, it may be challenging for some PSTs who fail to realize how the subjects connect. Projects such as the oral history may have the ability to strengthen PSTs' understanding of how topics can extend to other disciplines.

Emotions

Social studies also has the innate ability to trigger reactions, particularly when teaching topics that foster negative emotions. Although most teachers prefer that students express their emotions, Karn

(2024) found that since it is necessary to sustain a conflict-free classroom, teachers are the ones who decide what they will teach and whether students can display their emotions. To add to this dilemma, Kaya and Ugurlu (2024), who explored the skills that educators teach, observed that students had trouble recognizing stereotypes and establishing empathy. Since students' development of emotions are often shaped by teachers, it was presumed that an oral history would allow PSTs to realize how crucial emotions are in citizenship.

Historical Thinking

With the history of the world often unkind, students can lack the incentive to analyze why events and issues occur(ed). Myrto Michala et al. (2023) discovered that PSTs believed history would be a difficult subject for them to teach. Zafer Kus (2015) expressed how PSTs often showed a lack of concern about and unwillingness to teach U.S. and global political issues. Moreover, Martell and Hashimoto-Martell (2012) reported that despite teachers' desire and effort to provide students with different perspectives on historical events and issues, "students continued to read the textbook as the truth of the past" (p. 306).

Teaching history and engaging students in historical thinking may be challenging for PSTs; however, Karn's (2024) investigation established that teachers who used engaging methods such as project-based learning were able to arouse students' interest in history. To alleviate the fear and/or reluctance to teach history, the oral history might provide historical evidence to fill in the gaps of what has already been written (Cauvin, 2016), as well as help students make sense of textbooks' content (Yow, 2014). The oral history may also help stimulate PSTs' historical awareness and serve as the impetus to teach political issues.

Diversity

With classrooms today including a large diversity of students, it is vital that PSTs are aware of and practice multicultural education, an essential component of citizenship. Though research has shown multicultural education programs positively impacted PSTs' cultural beliefs and attitudes, Martinelle et al. (2024) found that a majority of PSTs lacked cultural understanding and Karadag et al. (2021) expressed how many educators fell short in integrating aspects of culture into their teaching. Therefore, for PSTs to understand diversity, social studies methods courses must find

ways to incorporate culturally responsive teaching through strategies and activities that can highlight identities, communities, and intergenerational stories (Boyce, et al., 2023).

Although projects such as the oral history are often perceived as time-consuming and discomforting when asking personal questions, Dundar (2017) found that practicing teachers who used the oral history to teach multiculturalism were often PTS who had conducted an oral history in their university methods courses. Since PSTs are not always given cross-cultural training as needed, the oral history might help build their understanding when collaborating with community members of diverse cultures.

Community

Although interacting with the community is vital to citizenship, as Crocco and Marino (2017) revealed, even PSTs who were born and raised in a particular setting are often unaware of its people and history. In researching this paradox, Utkur (2020) found that after PSTs were taught how to create an oral history in their social studies methods course, their knowledge of local history increased.

However, as Shopes (2015) noted, rather than create oral histories that will offer little more than collective narratives of issues and events, it is important that oral histories reflect different community members' interpretations of topics to hold greater truth. For example, Perrotta et al.'s (2024) study that focused on a Black cemetery research project found that students, who interviewed and researched several sources, were able to uncover the history of the community's enslaved. Timothy Monreal and K. Popielarz (2022) described how a community that was threatened by gentrification was protected by students who voiced multiple citizens' perspectives. Similarly to these projects, the oral history may bring forth knowledge and action about issues such as class, race, and culture from ordinary people who uncover a collection of societal realities within a community.

Method

Research Design

As the study aimed to explore how the community oral history project could benefit PSTs' learning and teaching of citizenship and determine if the oral history had the potential to become a permanent assignment in the social studies course, the study took on a qualitative case study

design, a method often used to describe how real-life events and issues contribute to social phenomena (Yin, 2009).

Study Group

The study took place in a South Florida university with 38 (out of 71) elementary PSTs who were registered in four undergraduate K-6 social studies education methods courses. PSTs were female, mostly in their third year of the undergraduate degree program, and between the ages of 18 and 21; however, there were a few PSTs in their 30s to mid-40s.

Although the study group was able to choose their own citizenship topic, participants were initially given a list of topics (although not limited) to consider (e.g., government policies, war, poverty, inequalities, migration, civil rights, and rights and responsibilities). After securing an interview with a member of the community who had witnessed or personally experienced a past or current event or issue related to citizenship, PSTs were required to research information about the topic their interviewee would speak about and design a sequential list of 10 open-ended questions they would ask their interviewees to respond to during the interview.

As the use of technology was a required course competency, PSTs incorporated technology (e.g., video conferencing, cell phone, laptop, tape recorder, etc.) when communicating and transcribing the interview verbatim. Since the oral history may have caused interviewees to feel that their identity would be revealed, the interviewees were anonymous.

Data Collection

The data that was gathered from a post-survey's follow-up questions (completed at the culmination of the project) was subjected to a content and thematic analysis of PSTs' written reflections in response to the following questions:

- (a) How did the interviewee's shared experience impact your knowledge of the topic?
- (b) How did the interviewee's shared experience impact you personally?"
- (c) How did the interviewee's shared experience impact your future teaching of citizenship?

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the oral histories were thoroughly analyzed and classified under themed topics that emerged from the interviewees' stories (Table 1).

Table 1*Interviewees' Stories: Themed Topics*

Immigration	Civil Rights Movement	Experiencing 9/11	The Cold War
Military	Gender equality & discrimination	Natural disasters/impact on humans	Working in a correctional institution
Entrepreneurship	Firefighters, police, and paramedics	Workplace discrimination	The Recession
Poverty & Unemployment	Societal change over time (past 80 years)	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., assassination	Global conflict

The analysis of the gathered data consisted of the researcher independently highlighting and coding keywords and phrases derived from PSTs' free response written answers and participants' oral histories. To reduce potential biases, external reviewers, such as educational colleagues, then confirmed the results.

To ensure validity, the researcher examined the original data with a second and third inspection to ensure that the data was correctly analyzed. To provide data triangulation and assure reliability, the researcher repeatedly reviewed the responses in relation to the recurring themes, kept a journal to log in miscellaneous notes taken during the multiple thematic data analyzation process, and took follow-up notes at the end of the study.

Though the research was conducted with PSTs in their social studies methods course, participation in the study was voluntary; those who were willing to participate in the study acknowledged their consent by completing the survey. There were no potential risks for PSTs who participated since responses were anonymous; PSTs could not be personally identified through a number or name. There was no recruitment plan or requirement to participate, and respondents were not offered incentives or compensation for their participation. Instead, the study offered PSTs the opportunity to willingly express their honest opinions about how the project impacted their learning and teaching of citizenship.

Limitations

The study may have benefited had PSTs been given a pre-survey to compare their initial and final views of the oral history; however, since it was determined through informal conversation during the start of the semester that students had no experience in conducting an oral history, the study only consisted of a post-survey. The study may also have been enhanced if additional social studies methods courses had been included. However, the study group from the four course sections

allowed the researcher to gain a preliminary understanding of the oral history's potential.

Findings

PSTs' oral histories encompassed a wide range of community members who held diverse narratives and perspectives of citizenship issues and events. The four topics most frequently explored included immigration (before, during, and/or after migrating to the U.S.); the military (e.g., veterans of WWII and Vietnam, being draftee or voluntarily enlisting, and life in the military); entrepreneurship (i.e., risk-taking); and poverty (e.g., unemployment and homelessness). Though PSTs focused on a collage of topics that showcased local community citizens' experiences, most were representative of what global citizens experienced (see Table 1).

In response to the question:

How has the interviewee's shared experience impacted your view of the topic?

PSTs often alluded to how they may "know the facts but did not know the personal experiences" and that the project allowed them to recognize how their interviewees' interpretation differed from how they were taught in school, learned through the media, or had presumed.

To exemplify, PSTs who conducted interviews on the topic of immigration were able to substantiate their prior beliefs about the obstacles immigrants faced (i.e., difficulties during their immigration journey); however, there were other PSTs who found that some immigrants did not have a difficult time migrating to America. As one PST expressed, "I had assumed that all immigration stories were unpleasant, unspeakable, and dreadful."

This could also be said for the PSTs who interviewed Vietnam War veterans and concluded that although these servicemen may have taken part in the same war, they each experienced it differently. Other examples included how PSTs "learned a lot about what it was like to fight in war" while others determined that "the military is not all about war; there is more to it than just being a soldier" (e.g., brotherhood, life skills taught, etc.). Some described how their interviewees were drafted into the Vietnam War without having a choice, "which is scary," while other PSTs noted how their interviewees voluntarily enlisted.

Risk-taking entrepreneurs, too, often conveyed a seamless step-by-step plan that could build a thriving business, while others described how their business resulted in bankruptcy. Thus, no two stories were exactly alike.

There were also PSTs who expressed how events and issues, often deemed as controversial, became magnified through their interviewees' stories. For instance, when interviewing an individual who experienced the Civil Rights Movement, one PST reported having received "an inside perspective and understanding of racism from a non-textbook point of view." Also difficult to discuss in the classroom is the topic of LGBTQ; one PST noted how they never knew "how the process of being transgender worked" since it is rarely discussed. For PSTs who focused on individuals who experienced poverty, comments included how the stories were "just mind blowing" or how they "did not know the full break-down of how some people in the community end up living in poverty."

On the topic of experiencing natural disasters, PSTs were able to grasp the severity of past hurricanes. For earthquakes, such as the one that occurred in Haiti in 2012, one PST realized the immense impact natural disasters have on people's lives (e.g., rebuilding, having to migrate, etc.). Concerning the Cold War, one PST concluded that the project offered them "the chance to know what real life was like for people during this political and social era."

When discussing the topic of working in a correctional institution, one respondent commented how they never realized what a prisoner faced when incarcerated, as well as when released. For those who experienced 9/11, PSTs noted how their interviewees' reactions to the event were "more telling than their words" and that people "will be affected for a lifetime."

PSTs often cited the project as meaningful due to having gained content knowledge through different perspectives and experiences, receiving confirmation that events took place, and realizing there was more to an event or issue than what they originally thought. PSTs reported, "When hearing a story directly from a person's mouth, one gains greater insight of a topic rather than reading about it in a textbook or on social media" and "I learned details of events I never learned about in school when I was younger."

Other PSTs discovered that the oral history project allowed them to gain a real-world understanding of the past to present with mentions such as "I had the chance to hear a first-hand experience about an important topic we still deal with today."

Regarding the question:

How did the interviewee's shared experience impact you personally?

PSTs often conveyed how they were made to feel as if they were a part of their interviewee's experience. For instance, "he made me feel what it was like to walk in his shoes." For those

whose interviews pertained to immigration, PSTs often became more appreciative of their U.S. citizenship status once they became aware of the process that many immigrants went through to become America citizens. Many PSTs were moved by their interviewee's story; for example, when an interviewee discussed an unjust civil rights issue, one PST noted how "I could feel her emotions. It was a very sad and intense feeling. I felt as though she has seen a lot of pain in her life." PSTs who interviewed military veterans often displayed gratitude – as well as frustration as to why "veterans do not get the support they need when returning home from war!"

The emotions exhibited by interviewees were often transferred onto the interviewers, which in turn inspired PSTs to engage in civic action. For example, "My interviewee impacted me personally because of the way she spoke about how today's generation could make a difference." For the PSTs who interviewed individuals they knew, it was often reported that the project allowed them to learn about their acquaintances' experiences that they may never have had the chance to otherwise.

In connection to one's own life, PSTs' responses often suggested that the project allowed them to learn more about themselves; for example, "After listening to my interviewee's story, it made me realize that my life is way better than I put it out to be."

Other PSTs' responses noted that the project allowed them to become sympathetic towards individuals' experiences and "talk about an important topic in a very different way."

In answer to the question:

How will the interviewee's story impact your future teaching of citizenship?

PSTs often stated how they would incorporate the content learned into their future classroom and have their students conduct oral histories. As one PST expressed, "I recognized the importance of helping students dig a little deeper into people's experiences and listen to their stories."

Other PSTs frequently cited the importance of talking more to seniors who held so much history, yet who do not often talk about their experiences because, as one PST insisted, "no one asks." Also noted was how the project allowed them to "be more appreciative of elders" since "these people won't be alive forever to share what they know so it's important for us to keep it going with the next generation."

PSTs also gained an interest in bringing community guest speakers into the classroom; for example, "Community members give a raw and emotional connection to the social studies curriculum, experiences no textbook can take away from and no worksheet can add value to."

Several respondents noted how the project was an impactful way to learn citizenship by commenting how it accentuated “the social aspect of social studies” and allowed them to feel more connected to social studies, motivated to “keep history alive,” and mindful of how “social studies is everywhere – it can be about anything.”

One PST even offered that the project “should be a mandatory assignment.”

Discussion

As a majority of PSTs reported that the project allowed them to gain a deeper understanding of citizenship and learn from everyday people whose perspectives contributed to understanding the past and present, this correlated with Dewey’s (1928) philosophy that social studies should consist of a pedagogical framework grounded in inquiry-based activities that offer new citizenship opportunities in and out of the classroom. The project also showcased higher-order questioning, a practice that PSTs could regularly employ in their future instruction, and elements of citizenship such as lived experience, perspectivism, multiculturalism, empathy, community, and civic action – elements that Rugg (1939) would insist reflected a curriculum of humanity. Although a few PSTs commented on how they felt indifferent about conducting an oral history and acknowledged that they thought the project would be an overwhelming task, others found that the project did not take much effort to complete. For the slight number of PSTs who reported having difficulties in asking questions as they did not want to come across as being rude or prying into one’s life, this obstacle was often the result of not having prepared questions well or being uncertain of the project’s significance to the citizenship’s curriculum. Although it was also noted that a few PSTs struggled with securing interviewees and, therefore, chose to interview acquaintances or family members, still, powerful once-unspoken stories were revealed. These issues correlate to Dundar’s (2017) study that focused on the challenges of conducting oral histories (e.g., time-consuming, difficulty finding and scheduling interviewees, and feeling discomfort when asking personal questions) and the benefits: how PSTs preconceived notions and biases of citizenship, and the purpose of the oral history, were positively altered or enhanced.

Given the present-day political, social, and educational barriers, most significant was that the oral histories’ coverage of controversial topics helped alleviate PSTs’ fear of talking about these troublesome topics. Vygotsky (as cited in Saleen, et al., 2021) would most likely agree that as a result of PSTs interviewing community members and using their questioning skills to evoke

citizens' memories of issues and events often deemed as contentious, PSTs developed confidence in teaching difficult topics in their future classrooms.

Many of the interviewees' stories left enduring marks on PSTs; not only were relationships and empathy established, but PSTs' advocacy was ignited. Similarly to how Freire (2021) professed that dialogue had the power to arouse consciousness, when interviewees described an injustice, PSTs often took away a sense of civic duty. For those participants who expressed their desire to bring about change, the oral history offered a type of "redress and reconciliation," meaning, it motivated them to alter "historical harms" (Llewellyn & Ng-A-Fook, 2020, p. 1).

With in-depth details often disclosed about an event or issue, PSTs felt as if they had been present, lessening the distance to a situation that occurred years ago. This confirmed Yow's (2014) discussion on how human history can make a textbook's content more comprehensible and relatable to students. Thomas Cauvin's (2016) assertion that oral histories can highlight textbooks' missing history was displayed when often overlooked or eliminated stories were told by the interviewees. These connections led to PSTs recognizing the gaps that exist between the textbook and human accounts, and the need for more human stories.

Conclusion

By conducting oral histories with community members, PSTs were able to gain a more humanistic, authentic, and deeper understanding of past to present issues and events. PSTs' own lives were impacted as they realized the social and political issues that citizens faced – and were inspired to become civically engaged. As a result of this oral history inquiry-based project, PSTs' desire to teach citizenship education and discuss worrisome topics in their future classrooms was raised. The oral history project offered PSTs a better understanding of the term *citizenship* and how it is deeply connected to democracy.

These realizations can take on new meaning for a social studies methods course. In addition to having the oral history as coursework, future research will consist of conducting oral history professional development workshops to examine how the sharing of group members' oral histories might impact each other. A pre-survey could be included to determine PSTs' understanding of citizenship prior to conducting the oral history.

An additional study could examine how the study's elementary PSTs used the oral history in their future classrooms and how it impacted their young students. When considering the resources that

the community holds for students and how education programs seek ways to connect learning with the community, having PSTs conduct oral histories can help support this mission. The oral history can help build the foundation of citizenship not only for PSTs themselves but, most importantly, for their future students.

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