

## Chapter 5

# Diversity, Democracy, and Documentation: A Self-Study Path to Sharing Social Realities and Challenges in a Field-Based Social Studies Curriculum Methods Course

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In the United States, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) defines social studies as a discipline that prepares students to become active participants in democracy. Given the diversity within the United States, ensuring that diversity issues are explored within elementary social studies curriculum methods courses is crucial to this endeavor. The design and placement of diversity-oriented teaching experiences and content for preservice teachers can be challenging for teacher educators and capturing teachable moments related to diversity and social studies is even more difficult. Drawing from Guðjónsdóttir's (2006) work helping preservice teachers focus on diversity and inclusion, I decided to use Praxis Inquiry (PI) and the Praxis Inquiry Protocol (PIP) form as part of a self-study effort designed to hone my skills for bringing issues of diversity and democracy to the forefront in the context of the social studies curriculum methods course.

Praxis Inquiry encourages preservice teachers to base their questions in practice and teacher educators to weave their teaching through the preservice teachers' inquiries. The Praxis Inquiry Protocol is the form that is used to develop a written record of the process. As the course I was teaching was a field-based course involving significant coteaching of social studies, there were many opportunities for the protocol to be used to analyze classroom events. Coteaching is a model of teacher education where teacher candidates plan, teach, and reflect collaboratively with a master K–12 classroom teacher and a professor (Lang & Siry, 2008; Martin, 2009; Siry, 2009). This level of interaction with students and educators allows for an authentic context for bringing theory alive in practice. In this teacher education model the protocol was employed over the course of a semester in the context of two sections of a field-based elementary social studies curriculum methods course. Through using the protocol, challenges related to diversity and the teaching of social studies were documented and explored. The impact of the Praxis Inquiry Protocol on preservice teachers learning to manage and embrace diversity within social studies and my understanding of the course were explored on e-discussion boards as

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well. A critical document analysis of PIP records, e-discussion boards, and preservice teacher interviews furthered my self-study project. Ultimately, I concluded that managing and teaching about diversity requires openness, experience, and reflection. Understanding points of view and perspective taking are crucial in the diverse social studies classroom and the Praxis Inquiry Protocol supported the exploration of these concepts in teaching through creating a document-based interpretative mirror of teaching.

## Literature Review

### *Praxis Inquiry and Teacher Education*

In the introduction of their significant 2007 paper, Guðjónsdóttir, Cacciattolo, Dakich, Davies, Kelly, and Dalmau center the purpose of Praxis Inquiry in teacher education. They contend that

Current global visibility of ethnic, ideological, and social intolerance accentuates the need for teacher education programs to focus on the preparation of educators who can build inclusive student-centered learning communities that are based in appreciation of diversity and openness to the world. (p. 165)

Interested in bringing inclusive teaching practice to the forefront in teacher education, Guðjónsdóttir (2006) supports the use of Praxis Inquiry and the Praxis Inquiry Protocol as it has preservice teachers base their questions in practice and has teacher educators develop their teaching to respond and support preservice teachers' questions and inquiries.

Praxis Inquiry is an ideological framework developed at Victoria University in Australia and reported on by Cherednichenko and Kruger in 2005. This framework is organized around several beliefs: (1) The exploration of preservice teachers' questions about the ways students experience education and learning is central to their development as future teachers, (2) university-based teaching should be grounded in and responsive to the preservice teachers' questions, field experience, and inquires, and should involve preservice teachers in collegial and professional discourse to address questions and inquiries, (3) university teacher educators should acknowledge the significant impact social factors have on educational experience and learning, and (4) university teacher educators should engage in partnerships that allow the field-based and campus-based education of teachers to unfold in rich and dynamic school contexts. Praxis Inquiry (PI) is a model of teacher education that provides insight into the challenges preservice teachers face when they work to integrate readings and philosophical foundations into play with their actual teaching or interactions with students.

The Praxis Inquiry Protocol (PIP) is "an effective tool" to support the enactment of "social justice actions" in education and teacher education (Cherednichenko, Gay, Hooley, Kruger, & Mulraney, 1998). The protocol allows preservice teachers to reflect on their questions and interpretations of teaching and learning experiences with students. As the protocol has a written form it allows for there to be a record of

these thoughts, theories, and action plans for change and development. As well, the teacher educator is responsive to the preservice teachers' ideas and questions and customizes the course to be supportive of the preservice teachers developing their practice to support the enactment of socially just pedagogies.

The Praxis Inquiry Protocol asks preservice teachers to slow down and reflect on their developing practice as teachers and consider alternative paths and solutions to classroom challenges. As a teacher education instructional tool, the Praxis Inquiry Protocol form allows teacher educators to see the preservice teacher's description of a challenge and suggestions for re-engineering practice. Specifically, the PIP form asks preservice teachers to write about some practice-based issue and consider and answer four prompts. The prompts are

- (1) *Practice Described* (Describe practice/event—cases, artifacts, anecdotes—and identify key questions—what do I wonder about when I think about this practice/event?),
- (2) *Practice Explained* (Seek and discover professional explanations [literature, textbooks, mentors, colleagues, etc.] for one's practice—How can I understand this practice/event?),
- (3) *Practice Theorized* (Consider the over-riding question—Who am I becoming as an educator as I integrate these understandings and beliefs into my practice as a teacher?), and
- (4) *Practice Changed* (Plan action—How can I improve learning for students and improve my capacity as an educator? What are my new questions about teaching? Consider the social justice implications of educational practices.) (Kruger, 2006 in Guðjónsdóttir et al., 2007, p. 168)

Using Praxis Inquiry Protocol forms allows the teacher educator to differentiate instruction and provide support and knowledge of teaching methods within a context that is current and useful.

### ***Elementary School Social Studies***

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) published comprehensive national social studies standards in 1994 for the United States. These standards have invigorated the teaching of social studies at the elementary school level and have moved the focus more squarely on developing students' knowledge and skills so that they can have an active voice in a democratic society. Currently, standards-based social studies curriculum material is drawn broadly from ten NCSS themes and should use inquiry-based processes to “foster curiosity, problem-solving skills, and appreciation of investigation” (Mindes, 2005, p. 3). The standards have also encouraged many elementary teachers to move away from the *widening communities model* for the curriculum to the *cultural universals model* promoted by Brophy and Alleman (2006). This focus on the cultural universals at the elementary level has fostered the development of more inclusive social studies teaching practices and curricula (Alleman, Knighton, & Brophy, 2007).

Kincheloe (2001) in *Getting Beyond the Facts: Teaching Social Studies/Social Science in the Twenty-first Century* argues for a critical inquiry and analysis approach to the teaching of social studies. He writes that social studies should be taught by “scholarly democratic teachers” working as “knowledge workers” (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 30). In this model of social studies curricula, teachers, pre-service teachers, and students “take control and set the direction of the learning process” (p. 33). In this active vision of curricula, social studies is connected to everyday life and larger concepts through developing essential intellectual skills such as reading, writing, interpreting, and communicating (Kincheloe, 2001). Students develop “an awareness of themselves as social players—citizens who are shaped by social, cultural, and political forces” and can influence the social world (p. 33). Drawing Brophy and Alleman (2006), Alleman, Knighton, and Brophy (2007), and Kincheloe (2001) together, it is clear that social studies is the central curricular area for exploring diversity, democracy, and social justice.

### ***Teacher Educator as Teacher, Learner, and Researcher***

Teacher educators around the world have used self-study of teacher education practices to help clarify and interpret their work as teacher educators. The focus has been on improving teacher education through careful research, reflection on teacher education practices, and an inward look at how the teacher educator is evolving as an educator/researcher. The work of Russell (2007), LaBoskey (2004), Loughran (2006), and Loughran and Northfield (1998), ground my research and teaching, as I am concerned with my own learning as a teacher educator and with exploring social justice and diversity issues in teacher education. Korthagen’s (2001) ideas about linking practice and theory in teacher education guide this research and teaching. Drawing from Feldman’s (2009) conceptualization, self-study of teacher education is used as a methodology to ground this project.

### ***Inquiry for All***

Social studies curriculum methods courses are an interesting site for melding inquiry-based social studies for the students, Praxis Inquiry for the preservice teachers, and self-study of teacher education practices for the professor. These philosophical standpoints are consistent and allow for fluid movement between the positions of teacher/learner/researcher for all involved in the project, upper elementary school students studying the constitution, preservice teachers, and the teacher educator.

### **The Self-Study Project**

Two sections (one in the morning and one in the evening) of a graduate level elementary school social studies curriculum methods course within one semester were included in this self-study. Both courses included undergraduate and graduate

students although officially the course is a graduate level course in the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) degree program. In both sections, preservice teachers were required to teach one social studies lesson, with a partner, to a class of elementary school students. The morning class was taught in the field in an ethnically and linguistically diverse inclusion classroom at one of the college's professional development schools (PDS) and all of the students taught their lesson using a coteaching model with the professor with them providing at-the-elbow support. The evening class students selected their own schools and classes. For the evening class, three ethnically and economically diverse schools served as host schools. The 20 preservice teachers were all female, ranging in age from 19–55 years old, 25 percent of the preservice teachers spoke languages other than English at home (Spanish, Italian, and Greek), 50 percent were mothers, and all were new to teaching.

I have been teaching field-based social studies curriculum methods courses for 4 years and have explored various aspects of my courses and my view of being a teacher educator through self-study. In this study I wanted to explore how I could better teach preservice teachers that understanding points of view and perspective taking are crucial in the diverse social studies classroom. I had hoped that the Praxis Inquiry Protocol advanced and studied by Guðjónsdóttir et al. (2007) would support the exploration of these concepts in teaching through creating a document-based interpretative mirror of teaching.

I provided both course sections with materials such as Buhrow and Garcia's 2006 text about teaching multilingual children. We also read articles about inclusion strategies, Brophy and Alleman's (2006) reconceptualization of the rationale for teaching elementary social studies, and Lundquist's 2002 text about inquiry-based elementary social studies designed to enhance the students' abilities to participate in democracy and present their rational and historical voice. Throughout these readings, we discussed central issues and I emphasized issues of diversity and democracy as we prepared ourselves to coteach lessons. All of the lessons were thematically related to the United States Constitution and appropriate for upper elementary school students. Preservice teachers developed lessons titled *What is a Constitution? Our Classroom Constitution, Writing of the Constitution, The Preamble, The Bill of Rights, The Branches of Government and Balancing Power, The Gettysburg Address, From Idea to Amendment, Voting Rights, The Constitution and You* and many others.

As we prepared to teach the lessons, I asked preservice teachers to try to anticipate any aspects of the lessons that might be points where the diverse needs and backgrounds of the children might present a challenge or a need for specific support. Then the preservice teachers taught their lessons over an 8-week period. I observed and participated in all of the morning class's lessons and debriefed with the students immediately after the lessons. The evening preservice teachers reported to and debriefed with their preservice teacher class one week after the lesson was taught.

Preservice teachers were introduced to the PIP form in class and were asked to complete the form following the teaching of their lesson. Individual, paired, and group discussions took place to address the issues of teaching for and about diversity that were brought forward as the result of completing the form. Throughout the 8-week coteaching period, I kept a journal of my observations and reflections on the

preservice teachers teaching and on the PIP forms. As I was teaching the course I read the PIPs as they were submitted and worked to respond to the students' issues in class or on the class-wide e-discussion board.

Once the 8-week data collection period was over, I read all of the PIP forms and sorted them according to the diversity themes discussed in prompt one of the PIP form "Practice Described." Once sorted, I identified categories of preservice teacher challenge. With the categories identified, I went over my journal and coded it using the same categories. Finally, I reviewed the data with a self-study colleague with whom I teach. When we reviewed the data together, I was further able to discuss some of the changes I saw in my teaching, the preservice teachers' teaching, and ideas I had for adjusting the course and the program so that our graduates would be better prepared to teach for diversity in the elementary school social studies classroom.

Ultimately, I want to promote the NCSS position that the central purpose for social studies is to produce a democratic citizenry that understands the social justice issues fundamental to democratic institutions within the United States. Given this commitment, what teaching methods, orientations, and philosophies are required in teacher education to support this? Specifically, do Praxis Inquiry and the Praxis Inquiry Protocol support preservice teachers to understand and be able to deliver high quality elementary school social studies methods and curricula? In reviewing my self-study of teacher education practices evidence, can I find points of success and areas in need of development in my teaching practices, especially with regard to the use of Praxis Inquiry and the Praxis Inquiry Protocol?

## **Results of the Self-study**

I was excited to read the PIP forms as they were completed and submitted electronically. I am dedicated to the idea that having a strong social studies background is empowering and is a liberating path for many of the elementary students who are new immigrants to the United States and many of whom are ethnic minorities who have been underrepresented in the growth of our democracy or are economically disadvantaged. I think that there are some unique issues involved in having disadvantaged groups access the power of social studies. However, it is difficult to get preservice teachers to see social studies not just as academic content and skills but as something that has the power to liberate people.

As such, I discuss the results in two ways. First, I discuss the preservice teachers' writing and second, I discuss how this changed how I teach the course and see myself within this project.

### ***Preservice Teachers***

There were three major themes that preservice teachers discussed in their PIP forms as challenges and areas where I as the professor could provide more

support and direct teaching: addressing linguistic diversity, high levels of knowledge, and disability. Below are two select samples from each theme to highlight what the preservice teachers shared and then how this influenced my practice.

### **Linguistic Diversity**

Noreen,<sup>1</sup> a graduate student, shared frustration with finding a match between the lesson she and her partner taught and the needs of the bilingual children in the classroom she selected. Her frustration was evident as she described the practice in question on the form. She wrote about her cotaught lesson designed to provide students with an opportunity to interpret the Preamble of the Constitution of the United States of America:

*Practice Described . . .* When I think back on the coteaching it bothers me that we did not have books to offer the students that were focused on the Preamble. How did we expect the [English language learner] students to tell us what the words of the Preamble [to the US Constitution] meant in their own words when we did not have enough books to provide for them that explained what the words meant? Did we just expect them to figure it out from the clip art that we passed out plus some class dictionaries? (Noreen, PIP Form, 5/01/09)

Here, Noreen is able to look back on her cotaught lesson with a calm eye for detail. She realized that what seemed like a minor detail as she planned the lesson on paper, having texts that supported the lesson, becomes a looming issue having taught the lesson to 25 students in a class with many English Language Learners (ELLs). In her *practice changed* section of the Praxis Inquiry Protocol form she thoughtfully wrote about needing to find books at a variety of reading levels and in several languages to support the students with whom she is working. She also translated a song about the Preamble to Spanish to use with her students the next time she tried to teach about the Preamble. In many ways she learned through her teaching/writing/discussion cycle centered on her Praxis Inquiry Protocol form that the choice of text is essential and that jumping over the issue of language ability by using pictures did not solve the problem. Elementary teachers teaching social studies have to modify texts and plan for the array of diverse linguistic groups they face. Failing to do this is to leave some students behind.

The literacy courses in our school of education have been traditionally the domain of the literacy professors. However, this PIP form created an opportunity for me to start talking to faculty about the issues of teaching text selection and availability of multilingual texts and texts from diverse view points. As the result of these conversations, I have now developed a new mini course that will be collaboratively taught by professors from several departments about language, culture, texts, and community in teaching. While many courses touched on these issues,

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<sup>1</sup>All preservice teacher (graduate and undergraduate students), master teacher, and student names within this chapter are pseudonyms.

there needed to be a place in the teacher education curriculum where it was at the center of attention.

Trisha, a graduate preservice teacher with training in social work, wrote about shyness and how this social disposition complicates learning to speak English and participation in the social studies classroom:

*Practice Described . . .* In my tutoring group all three students were born abroad and speak a language other than English. Maria and Julia speak Spanish and Ann speaks Dutch at home. The girls often complained about having to learn American history and especially complained about the Constitution unit. All three girls failed to understand the Constitutional amendments and were reluctant to talk about the topic and looked away when I tried to go over the review sheets and texts with them.

*Practice Explained . . .* When I reflected on how hard it was to get the girls to engage and talk about the constitutional amendments I thought part of the problem was their confidence speaking and listening to English. All had passed the English proficiency test and were not receiving English as a Second Language (ESL) but still appeared shy and unwilling or unable to discuss the social studies assignments and activities. What I started to realize is that the girls lacked both a context for understanding the Constitution and I found out they did not know words and phrases like “pro and con” and who “We, the people, . . .” was referring to.

*Change Described . . .* When I started to think about how I could change my teaching to meet these girls half way and help them have “a voice” in class I realized I needed to do a lot of differentiation. I had to pre-teach the phrases and vocabulary. Also, I tried to think of Supreme Court cases that might help them think about why the Constitution is important for them to know about. I practiced class lesson questions with them before class so they could “try-on the words” without the class watching. I think rehearsing with them really helped them have a voice in class. Now, when I think about the girls I am not sure they were “shy”; rather they, as fifth grade girls, really wanted to seem cool and were unwilling to do anything to jeopardize that. The best was at the end of the unit watching Maria and Julia proposing to the class an amendment to the class constitution. They said “We, the students of Mr. N’s class”. . . (Trisha, PIP form, 4/22/09)

In this PIP form it was interesting to watch Trisha pull apart issues of differentiation, the needs of bilingual children, social needs of children, and the social studies curriculum. It is also a powerful example of a preservice teacher figuring out pedagogical methods for helping students to have a voice in class and develop an understanding of the foundations of our form of government.

As I reflected on what impact Trisha’s insights could have on me as the teacher educator I was struck by the lingering impact of the young students’ participation in the ESL program. While they had learned English, they did not feel confident about their language skills. This lack of confidence (and perhaps skill) was a significant barrier for engagement in the social studies program. I used this vignette in a mini lecture within the courses to brainstorm ideas about how to bridge language experiences so that children can start to feel confident about their voice in the social studies classroom. It reminded me to discuss the importance of using theater techniques to provide space to try positions and personas out with the complexities of the issues explored in the social studies curriculum.



## High Levels of Knowledge

Ana and Georgia, both undergraduate preservice teachers, taught their lesson in a fifth grade class that had not yet studied the United States Constitution. Their lesson was designed to be an introductory lesson about this critical document. The following is from Georgia's Praxis Inquiry Protocol form:

*Practice Described . . .* As we started the lesson we asked initiating questions to spark a discussion. We asked if they knew what a constitution was, and many students agreed that it was “a piece of paper that gave us rights.” As the lesson continued we asked, “Why do you think the Constitution was written?” and only one student, Henry, raised his hand. He said that the reason the people wrote the Constitution was to give people rights and freedoms. . . The lesson proceeded and we talked about power and how the Constitution distributes governmental power. We asked the students to talk about this and again only Henry had facts and opinions to share. Every question we had prepared—Henry could answer without challenge. . .

*Practice Explained . . .* When I think about Henry I think about the Buhrow and Garcia book. Inquiry is a recurring topic in their book. Inquiry is the developing of questions and answering them through research done by the students. This would have been ideal for Henry because he would have been busy and engaged in finding the answers to his questions and learning rather than answering our questions, which he already knew the answer to.

*Practice Changed . . .* Many teachers do not really think about gifted students like Henry. Teachers focus on the general education students and the special needs students. This has to change . . . No one should be over-looked. Everyone needs to be included in a democratic classroom. I plan to learn more about American history and I am going to organize lessons such that the students ask questions and do inquiry projects. (Georgia, PIP form, 4/15/09)

Georgia is probably right in her estimation that teachers are more aware and responsive to the needs of the typical or special education students than the needs of the “gifted.” However, this became an interesting teaching point for the curriculum methods course. I planned a discussion about what does it mean to be academically exceptional and what do schools or professional organizations mean when they talk or write about “exceptional students”? Through planning to address this PIP form with the preservice teachers in the course, I had a good deal of time to consider why it is that there is no course in our program about giftedness. Giftedness is not a required section in any course though there are required sections on disabilities and linguistic diversity. Why is the gifted population not addressed? These questions lead to a lively course discussion. Finally, we discussed strategies that would have worked well with Henry and the other children in the class.

Later in the semester during a lesson on the branches of the American government, Cathy, an undergraduate preservice teacher, faced the issue of high levels of knowledge and academic skill. In her *practice described* section of her PIP form she reported, “There was a stand out student in the group studying the judicial branch. He acted as the group leader. The other students seemed satisfied to follow his leadership and direction, but he seemed anxious and bored. . .” In her *practice changed* section she reached to integrate information from course-based discussions and reflections. She shared:

It is one thing to hear someone else talk about an issue or to read about it in a book but when it happens to me, then, I think “okay now”, this is what this feels like. Even though we talked about the needs of gifted students, I had not noticed this as an issue until my cotaught lesson. I think next time I am going to add more different levels of “challenge questions.” Also, I could have supplied a wider range of reading materials (below grade level, grade level, above grade level, and way above grade level) to support the student research on the branches of government. In the end, I thought I could have made the research project more challenging or skill level specific by being less directive, I could have asked the students to develop their own research plans rather than telling them exactly what to do. I learned a lot coteaching and reflecting on the experience. (Cathy, PIP form, 5/5/09)

Cathy’s reflection is intriguing because she is able to reference what we discussed in the course but shares that until she experienced issues or phenomena herself it was challenging for her to integrate the new knowledge, methods, and theories into her practice as a teacher. This PIP form supported my notion that cotaught courses are crucial because it creates a space where ideas, theories, and methods about teaching meet real students in the classroom. Preservice teachers coteaching have a high level of support from professors and masters teachers as they confront the issues of teaching and learning in context.

## Disability

Maura, a graduate preservice teacher, struggled with the social and cognitive issues of learning disabled students included in the schools’ full-inclusion model classroom throughout the 8-week observation period. Her PIP form, while quite elaborate, is included at length because the details of the narrative became so instructive to me as I thought about how to improve this social studies curriculum methods course. Maura wrote:

*Practice Described . . .* During a lesson on Amendments the small group of children I was working with was debating whether the amendment proposed to the classroom constitution was fair or not. The group of children were very engaged and explaining their positions on the proposed classroom amendment to the group. The group consists of two girls. . .and a boy who appears to have a learning disability. . . Miguel is a very bright child that sometimes has trouble staying on task. While he is quite articulate it sometimes takes him a while to get to his point.

Mariana and Jessica had the same viewpoint and thought the amendment should definitely not be passed. They felt that the proposed amendment was not fair to all students. Miguel, however, did not make his decision as quickly. He said “Wait right there! I need to think about what is good and what is bad about the amendment. What is good about it? It’s fun! Fun is fun! We study so much it’s ok to have fun sometimes, even at school.” To this Jessica said, “School is for learning, not fun. Besides, it won’t be fun if you are the one that messes it up for the class and the class doesn’t get their reward. Also, why should two people get free time if they didn’t work for it? Our vote is no!” she proclaimed, including Mariana in her statement.

I asked the group if the proposed amendment was fair. We discussed what fair meant and I asked them to think about the amendment proposal and decide if it was fair or not. . . . Miguel started to draw. The girls turned and started to complete their worksheet. I was about

to intervene in Miguel's drawing because I thought he was off task. He then started telling about his drawing.

Miguel had created a "Fairness" scale. He said he was struggling with his decision on if the amendment was fair or not because he thought it was mostly fair but not completely. Instead of vocalizing his views he chose to express it through art. As he explained his fairness scale and justified why he marked it where he did. It looked like a thermometer and he filled it almost to the top with the top being fair and the bottom being unfair. Miguel was communicating that the proposed amendment, in his opinion, was 90% fair. The girls did not listen to his thoughts but continued working on their worksheet. I wondered why the girls didn't want to hear what Miguel had to say. His explanation was very detailed, creative, and interesting. I also wondered why Miguel wasn't assertive and sharing his ideas with the girls.

*Practice Explained . . .* The girls in our small group may have prejudged Miguel and assumed his contribution was not relevant to the group discussion. The girls worked together but isolated Miguel from the discussion and decision making process. They did not listen to his opinions on the matter at hand. While I continued to listen and validate his ideas I should have drawn the girls back into the discussion. Miguel gave a very detailed explanation as to why the amendment that was proposed was not completely fair but was somewhat fair. The girls could have benefited from hearing his point of view.

"Critical pedagogy causes one to make more inquiries about equality and justice. Sometimes these inequalities are subtle and covert. The process requires courage and patience. Courage promotes change and democracy provides all learners equal access to power." (Wink, 2000) In this case, the injustice was subtle. Miguel did not seem effected by the girl's dismissal of his ideas or the fact that I allowed it to occur. Why had this not affected Miguel? It made me wonder, had this happened so often that he got desensitized? If that is the case, then that is very disappointing. . .

*Practice Theorized . . .* When the incident occurred I actually thought I handled it appropriately. I gave Miguel the respect he deserved and opportunity to contribute to the class discussion. He was allowed to present his ideas in a different way.

On the way home I contemplated why the girls didn't listen to Miguel or take his ideas into consideration . . . His ideas are well redeveloped and insightful. In discussing this moment in teaching with me, Professor Lang helped me see this incident in a different light. I was actually contributing to the student's lack of respect and isolation tactics by allowing them to tune out when Miguel was sharing his ideas about fairness. By not drawing the girls back into the discussion I was sending Miguel the message that his ideas didn't matter or count.

We can develop a thinking classroom culture by encouraging students to learn through questioning, researching, and critical thinking—this is critical pedagogy (Buhrow & Garcia, 2006). I want to be a teacher that facilitates critical pedagogy and fosters a learning environment in which all students are respected, valued, appreciated and get their individual learning needs met. All students should be treated fairly and equally. Teachers should aid children in building a democratic learning community that is centered on self-control, self-direction, understanding, cooperation, and social problem solving (Lindquist, 2002). I want to create a classroom environment where students listen and learn from each other and will stand up for what they believe in.

*Practice Changed . . .* It is important for me to be aware of the messages I am sending directly and indirectly to my students. While I listened to and appreciated Miguel's ideas it is important that as the classroom teacher I have the expectation that his peers will do the same. If they don't, it is not acceptable for me to ignore their inappropriate behavior. By not dealing with the issue, I sent the wrong message to Miguel.

It is my expectation that the children in my classroom will treat all of their peers with respect and listen to each other's ideas, opinions, and thoughts . . . I will also work with the children to build self-confidence and to be more assertive. "A learning community atmosphere is an open and supportive one in which students are encouraged to speak their minds without fear of ridicule of their ideas, criticism for mentioning taboo topics, or voicing forbidden opinions" (Alleman, Knighton, & Brophy, 2007, p. 166).

To help promote community in the classroom we will develop a classroom constitution in which the rules and consequences for the class are established . . . As a classroom teacher it will be my responsibility to enforce these rules and help promote a peaceful classroom environment in which as children will learn and thrive. (Maura, Praxis Inquiry Protocol, 4/29/09)

In many ways this was the most interesting PIP form collected over the 8-week period. Using the form Maura was able to use a narrative to show her unfolding understandings of a difficult situation. As she writes, she sees that perhaps she was partially responsible for the girls' dismissal of the contributions of a learning disabled student. The story is poignant and I used it to spark discussions in both sections of the course. I shared Maura's *Practice Described* with the course sections and asked them to work in pairs to consider what they might write in the *Practice Explained* and *Practice Changed* sections of the PIP form. Then Maura and I talked about her original writing relative to the course-wide responses. It led to the pre-service teachers clarifying their own prejudices about what being disabled means. As we worked developing course-wide strategies for dealing with a range of disabilities as the preservice teachers worked their students, it was intriguing to watch them develop a sense of the significance that the respect the teachers show impact the respect students show.

Malulah is a mature graduate preservice teacher. Her prior experiences, as a bank manager and the mother of a learning disabled child, color her view of teaching. She reflects on teaching about the process of amending the Constitution within a coteaching situation where other preservice teachers were helping her teach the lesson:

*Practice Described* . . . developing an original social studies lesson was daunting. I read the Constitution and *We the People* (a textbook), to refresh my knowledge. I wanted the lesson to be interactive. I remembered that the class was going to develop a classroom constitution and since amendments are such a critical part of the Constitution, the idea for combining the two led to the lesson plan on amending the classroom constitution. The objective of the lesson was for students to understand the process of how amendments are made to the Constitution. At first it seemed simple, but it is not that straight forward. . .

*Practice Explained* . . . Overall, the lesson went well. I became more concerned when it seemed that some of the students were struggling with the basic concept of developing the classroom constitution. I thought that would be the easy part. This was one of the moments when I realized you cannot take anything for granted about prior knowledge or what students will understand.

*Practice Changed* . . . Thinking back, I should have had some of the students share their thoughts about the process to clarify that they understood as I was teaching. It would have also served as a modeling tool. I found lots of things in the teaching experience surprising. I had differentiated the worksheets and glossaries but it was hard to get the students to use different materials. The children had trouble with the lesson and some of the other

preservice teachers that were supposed to be helping me out did too. I was surprised to hear one of the other preservice teachers say that she did not realize a class could have a “constitution”. When I explained that a constitution was like a road map for setting up a government and that each state had a state constitution and other countries had constitutions, she said, “Really? I never knew that.” I realize now you cannot assume prior knowledge; you really have check for it and develop the lesson to deal with what you found out. (Malulah, PIP form, 5/3/09)

As the professor responding to this PIP form I thought it was an interesting opportunity to discuss when a teaching method does not address the problem you were targeting. Malulah knew that the class she was going to coteach included several disabled students. She actively planned for all of the children based on what she believed would be challenging and dutifully differentiated (Tomlinson, 2004) the worksheets, note taking sheets, and the lesson glossary. What she did not anticipate was that some might still find the lesson challenging.

### *The Professor*

When I read the preservice teachers Praxis Inquiry Protocol forms I was impressed with their candor. It was a challenge for me to read the forms and think about how to modify the following week’s workshop or mini lecture to incorporate their needs and still cover all of the content and skills I was required to teach. In many ways, I was reminded of my time as an elementary school inclusion teacher. I was dancing between state curricular demands and the real life demands of the students before me. For the first time as a university staff member, now I was being pulled by virtue of having set up this self-study to see how I could re-capture the teachable diversity moments and help preservice teachers to teach social studies with a vision for democracy. An excerpt from my journal shows this dance in the moment:

I never know how direct to be in the social studies course and I often feel like I see the “diversity teachable moments” slip right though our fingers as I coteach with our preservice teachers. I try to slow them down in the moment and point out the dilemmas but most of the time, I feel like the preservice teachers are so worried about “really teaching” and finishing the lessons, that we miss the moment. (Professor’s reflective journal, Week 1 of 8)

During week 4, two graduate preservice teachers were leading a lesson on the historical context for the writing of the Constitution. One of the preservice teachers said to the class “The Patriots fought the British during the Revolutionary War. After the Patriots won they had to found their new country and wanted to set up a government, so they wrote the Constitution.” A fifth grade student, Jermaine, raised his hand and queried, “You mean American Patriots right? Because the British Patriots fought for Britain, right?” To this, one of the preservice teachers said, “No, the British were the British and the Americans were Patriots or Loyalists.” The master teacher recognizing value in Jermaine’s question then interjected a comment and said, “Jermaine, let’s talk about this more. What does it mean to be a patriot?” The conversation that ensued was about points of view, what does being a patriot mean, and are there only “American patriots”? (Anecdote recorded in the Professor’s reflective journal)

I thought this was a telling example because it illuminates the stiff interpretation of the unit content that some preservice teachers had and how this limited perspective and background made it hard to respond to a child who was demonstrating a high level of understanding of the required content. Jermaine was realizing that there were probably many “patriots” fighting in the American Revolutionary War. Also, he demonstrated in the broader dialogue that transpired that he was seeing that patriotic behavior could be interpreted differently depending on your loyalties. It might even be possible to consider a loyalist position as being grounded in a patriotic vision. The preservice teachers missed a diversity moment to support a high performing student because they did not have full control of the social studies content and vocabulary in play in the exchange with the fifth grade student.

When I reflected on the moment and thought about how to work with it to expand course discussions, I decided to conduct a seminar on the use of “no” as a reply to a child’s question in the classroom and then revisit the specific dialogue in class. Mr. N (the master teacher) was present for the seminar as he was the one that saved the child’s question and kept it alive with the class. Something I strive for is, for the preservice teachers to see the nuisances so crucial to social studies. Recording notes as we coteach and returning to them with the preservice teachers allows them to see reflection in action and helps them to be open to addressing and re-addressing issues that emerge through teaching.

Though preservice teachers are required to have completed a course in history prior to taking this course, I think that part of the challenge that they have in identifying diversity moments in the teaching of social studies is that they lack or perhaps lack confidence in their knowledge of American history, government, and current issues. This lack of depth of knowledge of the content that is central to elementary social studies makes it difficult to view the content from multiple vantage points. Going forward, I have decided to add a refresher “mini course on American History and governance” within the social studies methods course. As well, I have requested that the prerequisite for this course be changed from a “course in history” to a course titled *The Development of America I and II* which is a two semester sequence that covers the development of America from the Age of Discovery to the present and one course in American governance.

## Discussion

In many ways, I think it is very difficult to capture the essence of moments when diversity issues are central to a social studies lesson. However, it is critical that we support preservice teachers to develop an eye to see this curricular view both in planning and as lessons unfold. If this view and pedagogical skills for engaging diverse points of view into the conversation of social studies is not developed then, diversity is not embraced and is only a tangent to the main curriculum of preset content and skills and does not prepare anyone to engage in democracy and the search for the greatest good for the greatest number. Praxis Inquiry and the Praxis Inquiry Protocol did make diversity issues in the teaching of social studies become

more clear and actionable in the Elementary Social Studies Curriculum Methods course.

Based on a self-study project focused on whether field-based learning could transform preservice teachers understanding of social studies teaching and learning, Ritter, Powell, and Hawley (2007) concluded that unless teacher educators create opportunities for critical examination of preservice teacher beliefs and rationales of teaching, they will “continue to enter student teaching without the ability to make connections between what they are teaching and the contextual issues raised by their student teaching placements” (p. 352). Ritter, Powell, and Hawley’s thought is similar to my conclusion. If we are to prepare elementary teachers to engage in social studies as a means to support democracy this requires a significant re-examination of many preservice teachers’ beliefs and rationales about why one might teach social studies. Intensive learning experiences teaching children supported by teacher educators, reflecting on lessons and experiences, and creating and teaching lessons based on action plans for change are essential.

Teaching using the Praxis Inquiry and Praxis Inquiry Protocol created a unique window for the preservice teachers to see their work with students and allowed me as the teacher educator to respond to their inquiries as part of the course. As well, the protocol documents became a springboard for me to consider what prerequisite experiences would give greater dominion to the preservice teachers’ understanding of the teaching of social studies in the elementary school classroom.

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