Exploring the Associations Preservice Social Studies Teachers Make Between Discussion as a Pedagogical Approach and Democratic Education: A Multi-Case Study

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EXPLORING THE ASSOCIATIONS PRESERVICE SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS MAKE BETWEEN DISCUSSION AS A PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH AND DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION: A MULTI-CASE STUDY

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Curriculum and Instruction

by
Rory Philip Tannebaum
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Accepted by:
Cynthia Deaton, Committee Chair
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ABSTRACT

Educational scholars and political theorists credit the use of discussion in the K-12 classroom as a way to provide students with a democratic education through its ability to incorporate various perspectives, inform students of current events and issues, and teach students to think critically about a range of topics. Despite this, however, an extensive body of research details the lack of discussion occurring in K-12 classrooms in the United States. This study seeks to examine this issue by exploring the associations preservice social studies teachers make between the underlying principles of democratic education and the use of discussion in the social studies classroom. The present qualitative multi-case study examines how six preservice social studies teachers at a large southeastern university define, conceptualize, and value discussion as a pedagogical approach. Findings suggest that preservice social studies teachers do see value in the use of discussion and associate it with broad themes of democratic education. However, because their understandings of democratic education are often vague and unclear, the associations being made often do not reflect the work being conducted within academia. This study has potential to make a substantial contribution to both the fields of teacher education and social studies education by providing scholars in both fields with a better understanding of how preservice social studies conceptualize discussion as a pedagogical approach and the extent to which they can connect the practice with theories of democratic education.
DEDICATION

This manuscript is dedicated to four people: My mother and father for their unwavering support and for introducing me to the joys of education, my brother for constantly reminding me to never take things too seriously, and my girlfriend for making the past couple of years memorable for reasons beyond this dissertation. I truly could never express my appreciation enough to the four of you.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

If given the chance, I could probably write an acknowledgements section as long as my actual dissertation. Too many people have contributed to my efforts while completing this degree and it would be impossible to list all of them. Even as I have been drafting this section – long after having defended this dissertation - I have found it difficult to express my sincere appreciation for those who have helped me in just a few short sentences. However, here goes…

I would be remiss if I did not thank my family first and foremost. My parents have always encouraged me to do what I wanted and have provided me with an array of opportunities to do so. I certainly would never have gotten to this point without their unwavering support and I cannot express my appreciation to them enough. The same goes for my extended family – Sherry, Charles, and Anne - who have always been the most supportive and loving people.

My brother – Michael – has also been instrumental in my completion of this degree (and certainly deserves a paragraph of his own). He has consistently served as a friend and a sounding board. And though he would never admit it, he has set the bar for graduate students incredibly high and, in doing so, has motivated me to be a better scholar, writer, and student. Completing a doctoral program alongside him has certainly been difficult, but it has undoubtedly made my work better.

I also could not possibly thank everyone at Clemson University enough. Since my first day, the faculty, staff, and my cohort have welcomed me with open arms. My chair – Dr. Cynthia Deaton – was kind enough to agree to advise a “social studies guy” without
hesitation. She provided invaluable feedback along the way and has helped me grow as a scholar and teacher. The rest of my committee – Drs. LaGarrett King, Hans Klar, and Celeste Bates – allowed me to pursue my own interests while simultaneously providing feedback that improved my research immensely.

Similarly, Dr. Susan Cridland-Hughes – who served as the unofficial fifth member of my committee – has spent the past two years providing me with guidance and laughter. She has helped me think about my research in new ways and been the most flexible advisor a graduate student could ask for. I have no idea if I could have completed this degree without her, but I do know that working with her has been one of the best parts of my program. Likewise, Dr. Suzanne Rosenblith has served as an incredible mentor. She has given me invaluable advice and helped me grow as a teacher educator.

As important as anyone, the six participants of this study deserve recognition for agreeing to participate and being so amazing about submitting work, scheduling interviews, and finding days where I could watch them teach! The six of them were truly the most flexible group of people who have been such a pleasure to work with and get to know the past few years. Needless to say, I could not have done this without them and I am forever indebted to them!

Finally, Ashley Colquhoun has been an absolute champion during the past couple of years. She was there when I first started thinking of the premise to this dissertation – over two years ago – and never once complained when I had to work on it or felt the need to vent about it. She has consistently been supportive of my efforts and has always been there to remind me to smile and enjoy life. I cannot thank her enough for that!
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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction to Dissertation

Schools in the United States have long been charged with the responsibility to develop individuals capable of entering a pluralist society as informed and engaged citizens (Barton, 2012; Dinkelman, 1999; Kubow, 1997; Levstik & Tyson, 2010). Though the means for developing such citizens is often the subject of intense debate, teachers, scholars, and policymakers alike acknowledge the use of discussion in the classroom as a critical component to a student’s education and their development into “good” citizens (Adler, 2008; Preskill, 1997; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). In this sense, scholars often argue that the use of discussion in the classroom has the potential to help students recognize how knowledge is constructed and narratives can be marginalized (Banks, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2003), engage students in discussions on current events and issues (Hess, 2004b/2009; Macedo, 2004), lead students to understand and empathize with one another (Gutmann, 1999; Parker, 2003) and help schools foster a more educated and informed citizenry (Parker, 2003/2005). More broadly, the use of discussion as a pedagogical approach can lead to students having the capability of entering the public sphere (Habermas, 1989) as participatory citizens engaged in a continuous discourse and ‘collective action’ on an array of issues and events (Hess, 2009). Scholars, thus, have described discussion as “an indispensable part of democratic education” (Preskill, 1997, p. 342).

Background of the Study

Since the 18th century, advocates of the public school system in the United States have continuously emphasized how schools must develop individuals who are capable of
existing in a pluralist nation as informed and engaged citizens (e.g., Dewey, 1900; Parker, 2003). In 1789, Jefferson went so far as to state the primary purpose of the school system was to prevent a tyrannical government from developing by enlightening future generations of citizens in the United States to participate in society and understand how a democratic government functions. Mann (1848), likewise, sought to promote compulsory education to a new generation of students who needed to develop the skills, understandings, and moral dispositions required to become part of a democratic society. Later, Dewey (1916) wrote extensively on the connections between the school system in the United States and the sustainability of a democracy. Foundationally speaking, Dewey wrote that democracy and schooling were inextricably linked and that United States’ school system was expected to promote the growth of students through educative, collaborative efforts that would, subsequently, lead to the collective growth of society (Dewey, 1916; Nieto, 2005; Preskill, 1997).

Such ideals have continued into the early-twenty-first century in which an enduring aim for the United States’ school system has become that of fostering citizens capable of existing in a pluralist society (Barton, 2012; Gutmann, 1999; Parker, 2003). Though such an aim has a variety of components, a major element is that of fostering the ability in students to participate in group-talk with fellow citizens who come from different backgrounds, share contrasting views, and interpret events and issues in a variety of ways. To that end, the school has been charged with the responsibility for providing students with ample opportunities to learn how to properly engage in such discussion-based practices with their peers and, subsequently, develop the ability to
participate in an increasingly diverse society and interconnected, globalized world (Merryfield, 2001).

**Problem Addressed by the Study**

Despite scholars and policymakers consistently advocating for the incorporation of student-centered discussion into the K-12 classroom, the use of discussion as an instructional approach in the classroom remains a rare occurrence (Nystrand, Gamoran, & Carbonaro, 1998). Classrooms are often reliant on more traditional forms of pedagogy including teacher-centered lecture, students reading from textbooks, and individual completion of standard-based worksheets (Cornbleth, 2002; Kahne, Rodriguez, Smith, & Thiede, 2000; Knowles & Theobald, 2013; Russell, 2010). To borrow the words of Rossi (1995), “[The] social studies curricula in many high schools consist largely of isolated fragments of information without coherence or focus” (p. 89). Rossi describes the social studies as encouraging students to become passive receptacles of content-based knowledge in which teachers present information for students to memorize and recite on various summative assessments (a notion reflected in Freiré’s “banking model of education” to be described in chapter two). Such forms of pedagogy are troubling for a variety of reasons. Most notably, more teacher centered forms of pedagogy may teach students that their voice does not matter, that the knowledge they are presented with is concrete, and that the diverse views in the classroom are not as important as those of the educator.

This study seeks to address this issue by exploring how preservice social studies teachers conceptualize and value the use of discussion in the social studies. Specifically,
the study attempts to examine the extent to which preservice social studies teachers working toward teaching licensure internalize the underlying principles of democratic education and associate the use of discussion as a means for achieving such aims. In that sense, the study seeks to determine the understandings preservice teachers have toward discussion prior to entering the classroom as student teachers and explore associations between discussion as a pedagogical approach and the oft-referenced aims of a democratic education.

**Purpose of the Study**

The central purpose of this study is to explore the connections preservice social studies teachers make between the use of discussion as a pedagogical approach and the underlying principles of democratic education. With regards to the underlying principles of democratic education, the study draws from the work Gutmann (1987) who describes the ideal democratic education thusly:

> A democratic state is therefore committed to allocating educational authority in such a way as to provide its members with an education adequate to participating in democratic politics, to choosing among (a limited range of) good lives, and to sharing in the several subcommunities, such as families, that impart identity to the lives of its citizens. (p. 42)

The researcher seeks to add to the literature in social studies teacher education and democratic education by providing new understandings of how preservice social studies teachers conceptualize, value, and identify discussion as a pedagogical approach
and whether these dispositions align with principles of democratic education often advocated for by scholars in teacher education. The author hopes to inform teacher educators whether preservice social studies teachers identify discussion as a “best practice” in education, the extent to which preservice social studies teachers value discussions’ use in the classroom, and how preservice social studies educators associate discussion into both their pedagogical intentions and the aims of a democratic education.

The purpose of the present research study is to explore the perspectives of preservice social studies teachers and therefore provide insight to teacher educators who are developing courses and program-wide curricula seeking to ensure reform-oriented educators. Additionally, the author aims to foster a discourse amongst social studies teacher educators regarding preservice social studies teachers’ understandings of the field of social studies education.

**Significance of the Study**

This research has the potential to add a critical component to the existing body of literature in social studies education grounded in democratic education and, more specifically, the use of discussion within the social studies classroom. Despite significant bodies of literature existing both on the development of social studies teachers and the socialization of in-service teachers, there exists limited research attempting to determine whether the perspectives on democratic education advocated for by the traditional teacher education program actually take root in preservice teachers (two examples in which this does occur: Adler, 2008; Dinkelman, 1999). In other words, though a large body of research details what preservice social studies teachers *should* know by the time they
have graduated from an accredited teacher education program, there exists limited research exploring what such individuals actually do know and how they associate such knowledge with various classroom practices, including – though not limited to – the use of discussion as a teaching practice. In chapter two I will provide an extensive literature review of relevant scholarly articles exploring preservice social studies teachers’ conceptions of democratic education and the use of discussion within the classroom.

This study is significant due to its contribution to the field’s understanding of preservice teachers’ perspectives toward democratic education and discussion. This relatively new line of research seeks to understand the extent to which six preservice social studies teachers associate visions of democratic education grounded in the theories driving the field of social studies education with discussion. The study will be significant within the field in that it provides teacher educators with an understanding of preservice teachers’ broad views of teaching social studies and the extent to which preservice social studies understand and connect principles of democratic education and discussion. It is the intention that such information will inform teacher educators and program coordinators when developing class curricula and program requirements for social studies education.

**Research Questions**

Extensive exploration into the literature in social studies education and teacher education combined with a preliminary analysis of a pilot study conducted in the fall of 2013 led to the generation of several research questions. The following questions provided both structure and guidance as the researcher conducted the study:
(1) What is the nature of preservice social studies teachers’ conceptions of discussion as a pedagogical approach?
   a) How do preservice social studies teachers (PSTs) define discussion?
   b) What is the nature of PST’s beliefs about discussion as a pedagogical approach?
   c) To what extent can PSTs identify discussion as a pedagogical approach?

(2) How do preservice social studies teachers connect practices of discussion with theories of democratic education
   a) To what extent do PSTs internalize principles of democratic education advocated for by a teacher education program?

When developing the research questions, it became necessary to take into consideration the objectives of the study and the most appropriate organization of the research questions. As previously stated, the primary objective of the present study was to better understand preservice teachers’ conceptions of discussion as a pedagogical approach and the associations they made between the use of discussion and broad theories of democratic education within the social studies. However, obtaining an understanding of these connections was only feasible after developing a working understanding of how the participants (six preservice social studies teachers) valued and defined discussion as a pedagogical approach. Therefore, the first research question (and its sub-questions) were addressed prior to attempting to answer the primary research questions.

After developing an understanding of how the participants defined and viewed discussion as a pedagogical approach, the researcher was able to transition into the
primary purpose of the study, which can be seen in the second research question. In other words, the research questions were purposefully structured to gain a broad understanding of preservice social studies teachers’ conceptions of discussion as a pedagogical approach and, more specifically, the associations made between these beliefs and those advocated for within the fields of social studies and democratic education.

**Organization of the Study**

The present study employs a qualitative, multi-case study design (Yin, 2009) and uses a descriptive approach (Merriam, 1998) to explore the associations preservice social studies teachers make between democratic education and the use of discussion as a pedagogical approach. Data was collected at a four year liberal arts school in the southeastern United States primarily in the fall of 2014 through participant interviews, philosophies of education, coursework, observations of participants’ teaching experiences, and participants’ responses to a ‘best practices’ video shown in a senior level social studies methods course at the beginning and end of the data collection phase of the present study. This data was paired with a set of data collected in the fall of 2013 in a junior-level social studies methods course as a pilot study (a prerequisite for the senior-level methods course in which this study was situated). Data collected in this study was analyzed using an open-coding procedure (Glaser, 1978) as well as individual and cross-case analyses (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009).

Chapters two and three of this dissertation will detail why this study is critical to the field of education and justify the methods used to complete the study. Chapter two, specifically, is divided into three separate sections: a theoretical framework describing
the aims of a democratic education and the use of discussion in achieving this aim, a literature review detailing the research describing how preservice social studies teachers associate the field with theories of democratic education, and, finally, a description of how teacher education, discussion, and democratic education all rely on one another for the developing of engaged and informed citizens capable of participating within the public sphere. The three sections comprising chapter two are not meant to be mutual exclusive. They were written in this manner to allow for the most thorough description of several broad concepts in the field of education.

Chapter three of this dissertation presents a comprehensive analysis of the methods and research design used to conduct the present research study. The research questions, design (including context, setting, participants, and methods), and research paradigm will be described and justified in this chapter. The author describes the units of analysis and the means for analyzing the data. Further, chapter three presents ethical concerns and means for attaining reliable and valid data through triangulation, member checking, and the bracketing of research biases by the author (which will be clearly noted within the “role of the researcher” portion of the chapter). A description of the generalizability and transferability of the data and findings are presented followed by a brief summary of chapter three. In addition, limitations to the current study will also be presented.

Chapter four of the present research study seeks to present thorough portraits of the six participants by detailing individual case reports for each participant. More specifically, chapter four presents readers with a thorough description of each
participants’ biographical information including – though not limited to – experiences as a K12 student, motivations for entering the field of education, plans after graduation, beliefs regarding the field of education, and perspectives on discussion as a pedagogical approach. Chapter four, therefore, will serve to support the cross-case analyses conducted in the subsequent chapter, which, also, will serve as the findings of the study.

The dissertation continues in chapter five by describing the cross-case analyses and subsequent findings of the study. The author presents key themes that arose during the data collection and data analysis phases and attempts to tie them into the research questions guiding the study. Such themes expand upon and situate within chapter two’s theoretical framework and literature review. Much of chapter five is separated by the primary findings to come out of the cross-analyses on these individual reports detailed within chapter four. In this sense, chapter five seeks to provide readers with understandings both of the individual participants’ conceptions of discussion as well as broad themes seen across the selection of participants.

In the sixth – and final – chapter of this dissertation, the author presents a discussion of the study’s findings and provides implications for the fields of teacher education, social studies education, and democratic education. This chapter returns to the original research questions the study attempts to answer. Chapter six, therefore, provides explicit answers and descriptions regarding preservice social studies teachers’ associations between democratic education and discussion in the classroom and present how these findings apply to teacher preparation. Conclusions, therefore, are drawn from the data and justifications for such conclusions are supported through empirical evidence.
CHAPTER TWO: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Introduction

The author grounds this study in two critical areas of social studies education: democratic education and teacher education. In an attempt to provide proper attention to both of these vast areas of research, this chapter has been divided into three sections. The first section presents the theoretical underpinnings of the study and justification for providing students with a democratic education. After having presented this foundational description of democratic education, I then describe the role of discussion within the school system and explore how the use of discussion in the classroom can assist teachers in achieving the oft-referenced aims of a democratic education. I then use the second section of the current chapter to present a literature review of social studies teacher education which aims to explore the empirical research available describing the dispositions of preservice social studies teachers in regards to democratic education and the ways in which programs prepare preservice social studies teachers. Finally, in the third section of the present chapter I attempt to examine how the theoretical framework presented in section one and the subsequent literature review surface the gap in the literature describing the associations preservice teachers make between democratic forms of education and discussion in the social studies classroom. This section seeks to justify the critical nature of the present study and provide a transition into the third chapter of the dissertation.

I. Democratic Education
If there exists one consensus in the field of social studies education, it is that rarely do all scholars, teachers, and policymakers ever come to a true consensus of what students should know and be able to do after having completed a course within one of the field’s many disciplines (Adler, 2008; Barton, 2012; Evans, 2004; Kahne, Rodriguez, Smith, & Thiede, 2000; Stanley, 2001; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Be it the ever-continuing debates on the content students should know and the abilities they should acquire by the time they graduate high school, what constitutes a “good” citizen and how schools should prepare such individuals, or simply a true definition of what the social studies actually is; it appears scholars, teachers, and policymakers alike could engage in discourse on social studies education endlessly without ever arriving at definitive answers on these seemingly foundational questions. This can be demonstrated through a simple review of the literature published in one of the many scholarly journals focusing on social studies education (Ross & Marker, 2005). Evans (2004) – in detailing these enduring discussions – has gone so far as to describe the field’s leading scholars engaging in a “civil war” over the prominent theories and ideals within the field (p. 4).

If, however, one were to find an underlying theme to the work of such educators, it would revolve around the social studies serving as a means to develop students who participate in society, understand and engage with political issues, and practice tolerance (and, ideally, reform-oriented action) and empathy to those with differing backgrounds and beliefs (Banks, 1987; Barton, 2012; Bickmore, 2008; Kahne, Rodriguez, Smith, & Thiede, 2000; Levstik & Tyson, 2010; National Council for the Social Studies, 2010; Stanley, 2005). In this sense, the classroom – broadly speaking – has enduringly been
described as a place in which students can learn how to live as a citizen in a pluralistic democracy through the incorporation of a democratic education. In Democratic Education, Gutmann (1987) defines a true democratic education and asserts the role of the school in providing such opportunities to students by claiming:

A democratic state is therefore committed to allocating educational authority in such a way as to provide its members with an education adequate to participating in democratic politics, to choosing among (a limited range of) good lives, and to sharing in the several subcommunities, such as families, that impart identity to the lives of its citizens. (p. 42)

Beyond this foundational vision for democratic education (which serves as the foundation for the present research study and the specific measurement of how participants view democratic education), however, the field has consistently failed to reach a consensus on an array of issues regarding what democratic education is and how teachers should go about practicing it in their own classrooms (Ross & Marker, 2005).

This lack of consensus, however, reaches beyond social studies education. The field of education—as a whole - maintains itself in a consistently discursive state and, subsequently, has continued to evolve since the 17th century. There exists an endless supply of theories, articles, thinkers, and phases comprising the field and playing critical roles in bringing it to where it is today. Because of this, it would seem fruitless to even attempt to write a literature review on the field of education as a single entity. Rather, due to its robust history and far-reaching influences, someone seeking to better understand the
field of education’s general position on a topic must narrow their scope and seek to produce a review comprising of essential figures, thoughts, and time periods in a practical and scaled-down manner.

Therefore, I use this chapter to focus on a singular component of the field of education: the role of discussion within the school system and broad theories of democratic education. Such a topic, albeit a seemingly narrow subject, is one that – once fleshed out – could also be considered too vast for someone seeking to present readers with a thorough description of an issue. Therefore, in an attempt to appropriately and successfully achieve this, I emphasize three essential areas: 1) The foundational aims of democratic education, 2) The role of group-talk – including discussion - in larger society and, 3) What social studies educators’ use of discussion can do to foster the oft-referenced aims of a democratic education. I first attempt this by providing a brief background on the various forms of group-talk including dialogue, debate, discussion, discourse, and conversation. From there, I provide an overview of Dewey’s vision of the classroom (with a specific emphasis on educative experiences and “growth”). I briefly follow this analysis with an outline the views of several prominent political theorists and educational scholars in regards to student collaboration through discussion and how such actions can impact society and the nature of the public sphere. Finally, I detail the place of discussion in the social studies classroom and describe how discussion situates itself within and alongside other instructional strategies in the social studies. This analysis will be paired with an exploration into the ways in which social studies educators can use discussion to teach tolerance and reform-oriented action, promote empathy, model proper
political conversations, eliminate ignorance, encourage knowledge construction, and contribute to a truly democratic society.

Defining Discussion.

Prior to beginning, a working definition of discussion requires attention. Though this definition does not include every component of such a complex and often-abstract concept, it serves as the foundation for both this literature review and the present study, at large. In its simplest manifestation, discussion exists in the form of “reciprocity and movement, exchange and inquiry, cooperation and collaboration, formality and informality” (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999, p. 5). Bridges (1988) claims discussion distinguishes itself from other forms of group-talk due to its “concern with the development of knowledge, understanding or judgment, among those taking part” (p. 17). Parker and Hess (2001) similarly note that discussion is “a form of group inquiry—a consciously share form, a listening-and talking form (p. 282). In other words, discussion is a collaborative effort that is contingent on the exchanging of ideas and subsequent inquiry into the beliefs and views of others. Discussion, in this sense, is an action among multiple parties that seeks to construct new knowledge through a collaborative, inquiry-based effort in which ideas are exchanged and views evolve. Within the classroom, discussion can exist in the form of multiple students exchanging views and knowledge to gain a better understanding of content. Such a learning experience involves an enduring conversation where no dominant individual is present and no dominant theory is considered accurate. This definition serves as the foundation for this paper’s understanding of what a discussion is and has the potential for in the classroom.
Discussion, it should be noted, is not synonymous with other forms of group-talk; namely deliberation, dialogue, discourse, seminar, and conversation. Several of these forms of group-talk have been described as a subset of discussion. However, for the purpose of isolating discussion as a single practice using the aforementioned definition, these terms must be explicitly differentiated from discussion. Deliberation, for instance, has been defined as “aimed at reaching a decision – at an action plan that will resolve a problem that a ‘we faces’” (p. Parker and Hess, 2001, p. 282). This form of group-talk has also been described as when multiple participants engage in a discussion on “issues as fully as possible by offering arguments and counterarguments that are supported by evidence, data, and logic and by holding strongly to these unless there are good reasons not to do so” (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999, p. 11). Dialogue, likewise, seeks disequilibrium among participants where "each ailment evokes a counterargument that pushes itself beyond the other and pushes the other beyond itself" (Lipman, 1991, p. 232). In both dialogue and deliberation, arguments are exchanged with the intent of reaching a conclusion (a component not required in a discussion). Conversation, Lipman (1991) claims the primary objective of conversation is to find some form of equilibrium amongst multiple participants. Lipman, like Burbules (1993) and Preskill (1997) considers conversation as more informal than dialogue, discussion and deliberation. Unlike dialogue, and deliberation, discussion’s primary objective is not to convince others of one’s view; it is, instead, to participate in mutual growth by sharing diverse viewpoints.

Despite these differences, the word “discussion” is occasionally used throughout
this dissertation to incorporate several form of group-talk. Similarly, throughout the individual case reports and the findings of the present study, the word discussion will be used in a manner that separates it from the previously mentioned terms. The purpose for isolating the term “discussion” from the other forms of group-talk (even where there exists overlap) is to attempt to bracket a complex and abstract term. It should be noted, therefore, that scholars have argued at forms of group-talk such as deliberation, debate, and seminar all have their place within discussion. However, for the purposes of the current study, the term discussion will be used as an isolated idea.

*Growth, the Public Sphere, and Collective Action.*

Regardless of the word one uses to describe the various versions of group-talk, the importance of collaboration amongst multiple parties both inside and outside of the classroom cannot be overstated within the realm of democracy and its associated principles (Avery, 2003; Flynn, 2009; Hess, 2009). Before thoroughly exploring the association between democracy and the ability to participate in a discussion, however, a broad overview of John Dewey’s writings on democracy needs to be presented. Dewey spent much of his career within the field of education defining democracy as more than simply a collection of government agents and participatory citizens. Instead, Dewey (1916) describes a democracy as a form of “associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” where all individuals contribute to the public life (p. 175). Dewey emphasizes a true democracy’s ability to include perspectives from “a wide variety of backgrounds, interests groups, and sub-communities” and adjust society based on the inclusion of this diversity (Dewey, 1927; Preskill 1997, p. 322). Such notions of
collaboration and inquiry (as reflected in the previous description of discussion) demonstrate Dewey’s (1938) strong conviction toward continuous “growth” of individuals stemming from multiple educative and collaborative experiences occurring within and outside of schools.

Dewey’s aims toward the school, therefore, reflect those he had for democracy. The context, in each case, must foster intellectual growth through inquiry, collaboration, and reflection. To Dewey, both the aims of the classroom and society as a whole mirror one another in that each was meant to develop individuals into autonomous and reflective citizens who continued learning in meaningful ways and were capable of constructing their own understandings of the “good life” (Gutmann, 1999; Preskill, 1997). Preskill (1997) eloquently summarizes the connections made by Dewey in regards to schooling and democracy:

The purposes of education and democracy are not separate but part of the same continuous process of stimulating and promoting growth. Both democracy and education, in their ideal forms, provide people with opportunities to exercise their cognitive and affective capacities and motivate them to pursue their development as individuals and as members of communities. (p. 8)

Dewey (1916), thus, saw the classroom as a setting in which students must develop the skills to participate in discussions and learn to think on their own through experiential learning and reflective thinking. In his own words, Dewey (1900) describes how the classroom has the chance “to be a miniature community, an embryonic society” where
student practice being effective, participatory citizens (p. 15). More specifically, Kliebard (2004) notes that Dewey wrote about the ideal classroom as a form of society in which teachers foster the art of discussion in their students and prepare them for the larger task of becoming citizens who collaborate on societal issues. This is seen in Dewey’s writing in which he frequently emphasizes the necessity in classrooms for discussions on social and political issues as to uphold a citizenry who is educated, tolerant, continuously learning, and collaborating toward an improved democracy.

Dewey’s ideal for a true democracy (and democratic classroom experience) grounded in collaboration and group-talk continues to appear in the work of educational scholars, political theorists, and sociologists to this day. German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas, for instance, consistently emphasizes a similar need for “communicative action” to maintain a strong and progressive public sphere; which he defines as “a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed [and in which] access is guaranteed to all citizens” (p. 49). Though Habermas and Dewey’s connection has long been neglected, similarities do exist in their pragmatic approaches to democracy (Antonio & Kellner, 1992). Habermas (1989), for instance, sees the public sphere in a manner similar to Dewey in that he envisions a true democracy (and, more specifically, the public sphere) as a place where individuals from all walks of life can contribute to an on-going conversation regarding issues relevant to daily life and the public good. Habermas, like Dewey, views such settings as an ideal democracy as a context in which individuals reach various levels of “growth” through communicative action. Habermas (1984) places similar importance as Dewey by describing the ability to
participate in a societal conversation by claiming, “The utopian perspective of reconciliation and freedom is ingrained in the conditions of communicative sociation of individuals” (p. 398). Again, the argument is made that group-talk (in any of a number of forms) within a society is a key component to freedom.

Brookfield and Preskill (1999), in a similar manner, see such a complex and all-encompassing ecosystem like Habermas’s “public sphere” as a context where the growth expands beyond the individual to a collective, societal level. Brookfield and Preskill claim in such an environment “a collective wisdom emerges that would have been impossible for any of the participants to achieve on their own” (p. 3). Growth, therefore, consists of a more educated citizenry than what previously existed. Similarly, as Palmer (1993) says, "all of us thinking together are smarter than any one of us thinking alone..." (p. 94). Rorty (1989), likewise, views the public sphere as a lively environment in which the interaction occurring as a part of it as a means for individuals who say “we' to people whom we have previously thought as 'they'” (p. 192). For Rorty, the space a public sphere creates is ideal for increasing human inclusiveness and achieving solidarity with one’s fellow man, something he considers to be a moral obligation of citizens (Preskill, 1997). Rorty, like Habermas, sees the public sphere as an context capable of fostering Dewey’s notions of “growth” and, subsequently, improving and sustaining true democratic principles while students learn to and from one another through on-going conversation (Preskill, 1997). The public sphere, thus, is explored as an abstract place with the potential to improve both human capacity to learn and live and a democratic system often consider broken. In this sense, the collective action occurring through discussion (and other forms of group-talk)
leads to growth not only at an individual level, but at a societal level as well.

Regardless of the form the collaboration takes among an educated citizenry, the collective action that takes place within the public sphere is critical to the sustainability of a democratic society. Brookfield & Preskill, Rorty, and Palmer’s notions of a collective intelligence, therefore, both inform and reflect Habermas’s (1989) ideal of a public sphere improving or fixing a broken democratic institution, which Habermas sees as feasible only through the collective action of an intelligent citizenry.

However, the use of discussion and collaboration within the public sphere as a place for growth extends beyond solely sharing ideas and engaging citizens in an on-going conversation. Scholars (following in the direction of Jefferson and Dewey) claim the use of discussion within the public sphere can promote a form of democratic dissent in which collective action is taken against a government to advocate for a more democratic country for all citizens (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Ivie, 2005; McMurray, 2010). Such an ideal for democratic citizenship dates back to Jefferson’s claim of generating an educated citizenry to prevent another tyrannical government from developing and taking advantage of its populace. Reflecting upon this, McMurray (2010) claims “dissent in American society is essential, and its value can be seen in repeated instances over the course of the history of the United States” (p. 49). McMurray, in other words, sees dissent within the public sphere and in direct contrast of the government as being an enduring action amongst an educated populace.

Within the context of dissent and democracy, Gutmann (1999) goes so far as to note “In a democracy, political disagreement is not something that we should generally
seek to avoid” (p. 5). Likewise, Gagnon (1988) claims, “young people need to see that conflict is to be expected and is not some failure of a system that should run itself and leave them alone” (p. 44). Rather, Gagnon sees the classroom as a place for students to encounter disagreements and controversial topics to discover means for approach such issues. More broadly, the majority of scholars, theorists, and philosophers see the classroom as a place where discussion and democracy should be intertwined in a manner where students can simulate the role of an ideal citizen.

Dissent, therefore, “serves as the medium of productive competition without which there would be no play of differences, and no way of holding delimited perspectives sufficiently accountable to one another” (Ivie, 2005, p. 6). In other words, the integration of voices into the public sphere (and toward the democratic body) with the intent of imparting change is critical to providing society with a form of checks-and-balances between the general populace and those in charge. Dissent, McMurray notes, “has been one of the precursors to democratic change and one of the staples of civic duty” (p. 49) Ivie (2005) similarly examines dissent through discursive practices as “a core feature of democratic citizenship” (p. 2). Moreover, democratic dissent as a form of citizenship is crucial to the interaction of ideas and competition of viewpoints from various sources.

Specific to this conversation, dissent as a form of political citizenship can only be accomplished when citizens are capable and interested in participating in such actions. Citizens must understand their role as dissenters and presenters of new knowledge as well as be aware of the proper means for introducing such beliefs in contrast to those of a large body (e.g., school administration or government office). And discussion is critical to
having this ability. The use of discussion allows for citizens to voice their opinions in a collaborative manner (or, to return to Habermas, “collective action”) in which one voice becomes that of many. Such voices can be either of support or dissent toward democratic bodies so long as the ideals driving such actions are grounded in rationality and evidence-based logic.

The ability to effectively participate into discourse on society leads into questions of access within the public sphere. Though access to the public sphere is theoretically guaranteed to all citizens, it bears repeating that participation in a public sphere (as Habermas defines it) is contingent on one’s ability to understand the fundamental requirements and expectations for engaging in such a context. In other words, only when an individual is capable of participating in the public sphere can they reasonably be expected to do so. This ideal reflects Rawls’s (1993) descriptions of public reasoning through political liberalism. At its foundation, Rawls sees citizens as being capable of participating in the public sphere only when they are capable of separating their own subjective beliefs with public principles that objectively benefit the larger good (Rosenblith & Bindewald, 2012). Rawls (1971) elaborates by saying that reasonable citizens from diverse backgrounds must agree upon a universal set of rules. Citizenship – and discussions that occur within this ideal – therefore, are contingent on citizens being able to participate in group-talk grounded in evidence, collaboration, and objectivity.

Further - and perhaps more broadly - a citizen cannot be expected or encouraged to participate in democratic processes within a public sphere if she or he has not yet been educated on how or why to be a “good” citizen through communicative action grounded in
discussion and – occasionally – public reason. Despite the definition of a “good” citizen remaining highly contested and out of the scope of this literature review, the foundational definition of a citizen who is autonomous, participatory, and informed remains mostly consistent amongst scholars whom vary in aims and beliefs for education (Boyle-Baise, 2001; Doolittle & Hicks, 2003). The National Council for the Social Studies describes (NCSS) four traits of an effective citizen: informed and thoughtful, participatory in their communities, politically engaged, and containing moral and civic virtues (NCSS, 2013). Though a broad and vague ideal, such a citizen can often only be beneficial to sustaining a democratic society when they develop these skills and dispositions.

*Eliminating idiocy and ignorance.*

Within NCSS’s four components of an ideal citizen, a major theme is that of being informed and engaged in the public sphere. Though countless means exist for becoming an informed and engaged citizen, liberal political theorist Stephen Macedo (2004) focuses on the role of the school and argues for discussion amongst students as a means to curb ignorance and apathy on current issues and events in younger generations. Macedo’s vision for the classroom as a place to promote citizenship and democratic principles aligns itself with the views of Parker (2005) who advocates for the elimination of “idiocy” in its original Greek meaning: a characteristic of an individual “concerned myopically with private things and unmindful of common things … like a rudderless ship, without consequence save for the danger it posed to others” (p. 344). When considering this objective, Macedo asserts, “active discussion of current local, national, and international events should be incorporated into the classroom, especially issues of
interest to young people” (pp. 12-13). Reminiscent of Gutmann and Banks (to be more thoroughly explored later in this chapter), Macedo sees the diversity within a classroom as crucial to introducing students to new ideas on current events and issues, which will ultimately influence their lives. And the primary way in which students can interact with such differences and content is through appropriately structured and facilitated discussion. Therefore, both Parker and Macedo see discussion as able to “improve students’ critical thinking and communication skills [while] promot[ing] the discussion of political issues outside the classroom” (Macedo, 2004, p. 13). Like Gutmann, Parker and Macedo see the school system as essential for producing “good” citizens who are capable of entering into and contributing to the public sphere.

Scholars, therefore, often argue for the use of discussion as a means to develop students who are informed and educated on current events and critical issues (Avery, 2003a; Hess, 2009; Macedo, 2004). The literature, moreover, finds a direct connection between citizens’ future levels of engagement and knowledge and interest in current issues and events. Social studies educators McCully and Barton (2007), for instance, say students who participate in discussions on controversial issues in the classroom are more likely to vote, engage in discussions with peers, follow the news, and consider their voice as important in social and political issues (as adopted from Hahn 1998 and Hess, 2004). Hahn (1999) additionally notes “evidence that students are more likely to develop knowledge about an interest in the political arena if they have the opportunity to discuss controversial issues in a supportive classroom environment” (p. 593). Hahn argues scholars have continuously advocated for issue-centered social studies classrooms
grounded in collaborative efforts since the 1940s. What Macedo, Gutmann, Thompson, Hahn and other advocates of discussion in the classroom call for is an environment nurturing of collaboration through various forms of group-talk on critical issues to ensure a participatory citizenry and, subsequently, eliminate the form of “idiocy” Parker (2005) describes as a self-centered state-of-mind.

In the broader picture, an education comprising of such instructional techniques relates back to the public sphere in which students are introduced to their role in a democracy and the value in a collective, educated populace. One only needs look at recent voter turnout statistics to better understand why such citizenship education (consisting of discussion) is crucial to maintaining an active and informed public sphere. In the 2012 presentation election, for instance, only 57.5% of eligible voters actually voted for president (decreasing almost 5% from the previous election in 2008). This number was considerably lower for the accompanying elections in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. This is especially concerning given the percentage of eligible voters who took to the ballots in a presidential election has not risen above 66% in the past century (27 elections) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). This statistic is even more concerning when one considers upwards of 34% of the nation’s voice is not being considered in issues directly affecting their lives. Even more recently, the 2014 midterm elections only had a 36.4 voter turnout rate (which the media widely described as the lowest voter turnout in a midterm election in 72 years). Again, this statistics is alarming given how many citizens were represented in this election cycle.

Outside of citizens’ responsibility to vote, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002)
explored political interest and engagement amongst citizens of the United States and found that not only do citizens not participate or care about political issues and policies, they often purposefully avoid participation given their understandings for how the government currently works and its status as a “broken system” (as cited in Hess, 2004a).

In other words, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse discovered that most citizens of the United States see the system as fueled by self-interest and partisan conflict to a level beyond repair and unwelcoming to new voices. Though discussion as a pedagogical approach is certainly not the ultimate panacea to this issue of apathy and – in a sense – pessimism toward the political realm, it is a step in the right direction for developing students who recognize their voices as meaningful and powerful and, therefore, feel positively about such political acts as voting, participating in public discourse, and repairing the political system.

This is to say the public sphere Habermas (1989) describes is open to anyone who is willing to participate in it (in an ideal sense). As such, the citizenry making up the public sphere must be comprised of a populace who recognizes the value of his or her voice and has an interest in contributing to the on-going discourse in society dealing with contemporary issues. As previously argued, discussion as a pedagogical approach can be used as a way to engage students in social and political issues and educate students on the proper ways to engage in the public sphere including through voting. The benefit of discussion on both controversial and open-ended issues in the classroom serves to benefit students beyond issues of social justice and their participation in the public sphere (Hess, 2004a).
For instance, discussion in the classroom can engage students in topical issues relevant to their daily lives and assist them in taking ownership of the content presented in class. The incorporation of topics relevant and interesting to students has the potential to motivate students to engage themselves in classroom activities such as discussion and collaborative projects (Bloom, 1976; Hess, 2009; King, Newmann, & Carmichel, 2009). This is essential to students experiencing a strong, authentic education relative to the tradition in which “the usual work demanded of [students] is rarely meaningful, significant, or worthwhile” (Barton & Levstik, 2003; King et al., 2009, p. 43). If students are to participate in meaningful forms of education which motivate them to participate in the public sphere, an essential component to doing so is in an academic setting in which classrooms and curriculums expand beyond “memorizing and reporting on specific information and content” (King et al., 2009, p. 43).

Such notions of providing fluid and contestable content are reminiscent of Banks’s (1994) ideas on knowledge construction and producing an individualized narrative grounded in students’ personal experiences, beliefs, and understandings of content (to be discussed further in the following section). Bickmore (2008) defines the task of the social justice-orientated classroom as “not simply to build procedural and substantive knowledge, but to facilitate constructive questioning (deconstruction) on the sources, shape, and drivers of that knowledge” (p. 157). Thornton (2010) parallels this claim by saying “in a democratic society, responsible educators strive for balance among reasonable viewpoints. They provide access to sufficient information so that students can make up their own minds after critical reflection” (p. 19). Similarly, such an ideal of a
nurturing environment that does not seek to control students but, rather, produce students who can think for themselves is reflected in Chomsky’s (2012) claim for an aim of education; "It doesn't matter what we cover, it matters what you discover." Regardless of whether it is the work of Banks, Chomsky, Thornton or another political theorist, classrooms should provide students with such an environment promoting autonomous thinking grounded in the viewpoints of many and an adaptable curriculum to increase engagement and eliminate ignorance.

Despite falling outside the scope the current study, it should briefly be noted that scholars often argue the “likelihood of successful school completion is maximized by student involvement and participation with the schooling process that fosters a sense of commitment and belongingness” (Christenson, Sinclair, Lahr, & Godber, 2001; Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, & Shernoff, 2003, p. 159). Students, therefore, are more likely to enjoy (and graduate from) school when the topics of conversation both involve them and are associated with their lives and open for interpretation (Segall & Helfenbein, 2010). In this sense, providing an issue-based education grounded in “authentic intellectual work” (including discussion) can lead to students taking ownership of their schoolwork and, again, feeling more motivated to participate in school (King et al., 2009; Scheurman & Newmann, 1998). Therefore, a “sense of commitment and belongingness” can more likely be fostered through discussions on current issues and trends incorporating both the views and cultures of every individual in the classroom (Shernoff, et al., 2003, p. 159).
**Diversity and Discussion within the Classroom.**

To become ideal citizen, however, individuals must do more than simply participate in the public sphere and be informed on critical issues. Rather, they must also understand how to interact with those who bring differing views, experiences, and cultures to a conversation. In this sense, educational scholars and political theorists consistently “[promote] a civic education that cultivates mutual understanding among individuals” (Newman, 2012, p. 17). Such an aim seeks to develop discourse within society containing fluid deliberation amongst multiple parties within the public sphere and promoting advocacy and reformation above sole tolerance. So the question remains of where and how these beliefs and actions can be developed?

Along with an array of scholars (e.g., Banks, 1993; Chomsky, 1994; Dewey, 1916; Hess, 2009), Gutmann (1999) argues the central place in which such skills can be cultivated is in a classroom consisting of a nurturing environment where diversity is welcomed, deliberation is encouraged, and democratic principles are incorporated into daily lessons. Schools, according to Gutmann (1999), “have a much greater capacity than most parents and voluntary associations for teaching children to reason out loud about disagreements that arise in democratic politics” (p. 58). Gutmann, therefore, sees the traditional school as comprised of individuals from various backgrounds and an array of opportunities for students to participate in a setting reflective of the pluralist society they will ultimately enter upon graduating. In such a setting, students can “practice” being citizens through collaborative efforts where they discuss ideas, share experiences, and inquire into open-ended issues with partners from diverse backgrounds.
Gay (1997) presents similar arguments regarding schools’ potential for promoting equality amongst a diverse populace. However, Gay emphasizes the element of multiculturalism (representing a pluralist society) seen in the classroom. In other words, Gay sees the diversity often present in the classroom as being critical to the development of Dewey’s “miniature community” and the ability of citizens to appropriately enter into the public sphere alongside a diverse body of citizens. The classroom, according to Gay, hosts an array of beliefs, experiences, and cultures making it an unusually diverse context in a child’s life. Whereas students’ religious experiences, family lives, friendships, and extracurricular activities are often segregated based on race, socioeconomic status, religion, and gender, the classroom is often a beacon of diversity in which students can participate in a microcosm of larger society (also see: Allport, 1954).

Because of this, Gay places a certain obligation upon schools and teachers to take into account the present diversity in a manner beneficial to students’ educations as well as their growth into citizens. Gay, therefore, asserts “schools cannot maximally serve the needs of the greatest number of students without dealing with ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity” (p. 6). On a larger scale, Gay acknowledges the connection as between true democracy and education by claiming that a school cannot “meet the terms of the social contract they make with citizens if diversity is ignored” (p. 6). Again, if schools are to develop students capable of entering into a multicultural society such as the United States, students must learn about those differing from themselves and interact with diverse ideas, cultures, and beliefs for an educative and productive form of “growth” to be achieved.

Broadly speaking, the school provides an environment capable of fostering such
educated and open-minded citizens in a variety of ways (Gutmann, 1999; Hess, 2004b). Because the school provides such a diverse setting, students have the opportunity to learn how to live in a pluralistic democratic society (Gay; 1997; Gutmann, 1999; Hess, 2004b). In other words, the diverse experiences, beliefs, and understandings each student brings into the classroom creates an environment ideal for discussion and collaboration on a range of issues. In this sense, the school has the potential to introduce students to novel ideas through rational deliberation that they may not have been exposed to within more segregated contexts. Group-talk in a proper classroom setting, therefore, can provide students with the ability to learn about one another’s differences in a manner that they otherwise may not have been able to experience due to limited amounts of diversity outside of the classroom.

Moreover, the diversity of the classroom as noted by Gay and Gutmann can lend itself to extensive student growth (to return to Dewey’s claim) through collaboration in the form of discussion. In other words, collaboration in the classroom can help students evolve into wiser and more informed individuals who are reform-oriented in how they act and tolerant of the pluralistic nature of the world. The use of discussion in a diverse classroom, therefore, can lead to the evolution of more well-rounded and informed citizens based on the exchanging of perspectives and experiences and the development of constructed knowledge. Such an ideal is reflected by Gadamer (1989) who in Truth and Method concludes "To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were” (p. 379). More
specifically, Gadamer observes a discussion (and, more broadly, collaboration) as beneficial to any individual – be them a student in school or a practicing citizen – if growth is present throughout the conversation and if the two participants continuously evolve throughout the experience. Much like Dewey’s notion of growth necessitating continuity and collaboration, Gadamer, too, advocates for contexts promoting the exchanging of beliefs and experiences to assist individuals in growing. And the school system of the United States provides students with a diverse context in which Dewey’s and Gadamer’s ideals for growth become plausible (Gutmann, 1999).

In this sense, the school (and on a smaller level, the teacher) possesses the responsibility of fostering the ability of students to engage in productive group-talk where knowledge is constructed (Banks, 1993), current and critical issues are discussed (Hess, 2004b; McMurray, 2010), and students learn to participate in rational deliberation with individuals who bring diverse viewpoints into a conversation (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996). Parker, for instance, notes, “competent classroom discussion in public schools … is fundamentally a democratic practice because democracy requires the sort of political friendship that allows…A culture of listening and speaking to similar and different others, publicly, about ideas, conflicts and public policy” (p. 12). Gutmann (1999), reflecting Dewey’s vision of the school modeling a democratic community, notes how a "substantial degree of democracy in schools will be useful, even necessary, to creating democratic citizens" (p. 94). In either case, the school becomes a place in which citizens are taught how to participate within the public sphere and use the diversity present to collectively grow.
Similar to Gadamer and Dewey, Freiré (1973) relates the art of participating in discussion with the true definition and achievement of a democratic society and individual growth. Freiré aims for the incorporation of a citizenship education producing “reformers” instead of “citizens” (Banks, 2001; Boyle-Baise, 2003; Freiré, 1973) While focusing on practices of the classroom and pedagogy, Freiré notes:

Through dialogue the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student and students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. (p. 67)

Freiré, in this sense, seeks to create a classroom that combats the “banking model of education” in which the student is viewed as an empty container to be filled with content by the teacher of the classroom. The banking model, Freiré’ (1970) postulates "transforms students into receiving objects. It attempts to control thinking and action, leads men and women to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power" (p. 77).

Much like many of the aforementioned scholars, Freiré’s aim is to generate knowledge in the classroom by eliminating both teacher dominance and individual student dominance. He encourages the use of dialogue to help students construct knowledge and collaborate in meaningful forms of learning.

Freiré’s notions of pedagogy describing the oft-referenced democratic objectives of education, in this sense, reflect Dewey’s vision of the classroom where students
participate in an ideal “miniature community” to achieve intellectual growth. Freiré’s ideal of a democratic classroom, however, emphasizes on the removal of all forms of superiority and domination occurring in the form of either a teacher-student relationship or a student-student relationship. Rather, Freiré seeks to surface such tacit domination (later reflected in Anyon’s “hidden curriculum”) through the efficient use of discussion and deliberation. Practically speaking, Freiré’s vision for the classroom is that teachers take a critical lens while educating in which a student-centered environment is generated and where institutional racism is integrated into the classroom to assist students in developing an understanding of such issues. Banks (1987), similarly, notes that “though most examples of blatant racism and stereotypes of ethnic groups have been deleted from textbooks and teaching materials, content about racial and ethnic groups is not thoroughly integrated into mainstream textbooks and teaching materials” (p. 535). Banks continues by describing the literal marginalizing of non-white cultures and experiences in textbooks and classrooms in a manner that perpetuates institutional racism. In this sense, Banks asserts that students need to develop a “critical consciousness” regarding the issues of domination and silencing that occur within and outside of the classroom to avoid perpetuating what Nieto (2005) notes as “grossly uneven access and outcomes” for non-whites (p. 60).

This aim, too, is seen in Banks’s (1993) analysis of knowledge construction in the classroom. Banks, a prominent multiculturalist, expands on Freiré’s notions of formal schooling as reproducing social hierarchies and attempts to curb such instances from happening by discussing how teachers can reverse such a trend in the classroom. Banks,
in attempting to do this, describes, “teachers help[ing] students to understand how knowledge is created and how it is influenced by the racial, ethnic, and social-class positions of individuals and groups” (p. 6). Much like Freiré, Banks aims to have teachers who assert knowledge as being constructed and contingent on those who have the power to decide what a curriculum should offer to students. Banks, to remedy this from occurring, seeks to develop teachers who use discussion – amongst a range of other instructional strategies - in the classroom to make students aware of this notion and critical of both the formal and hidden curriculums developed by those high in the social order.

This sentiment is mirrored in the works of Delpit, who uses *The Silenced Dialogue* (1988) to present her vision of teachers who make students aware of the construction of knowledge and power by those holding dominant positions. This, again, is reminiscent of Freiré’s “culture of silence” within the classroom. Delpit asserts a responsibility of teachers is not solely to teach students content or social issues, but also areas in which social hierarchies develop through the knowledge constructed by those holding power to develop curriculum, initiatives, and various other components of schooling. More specifically, Delpit argues that power exists in teachers, schools, districts, curriculum and textbook developers, and other bureaucratic arenas. Delpit says those who have been historically marginalized and subordinated can more easily obtain power by being “told explicitly the rules of the culture” (p. 282). This idea is reflected in Nieto’s (2005) argument saying that “public education has remained the best hope for personal fulfillment and a more productive life for most segments of our population” (p.
52). Much like Freiré who sees the need for teachers who interact with students through discussions on critical issues (and, thus, develop a critical consciousness), so, too, does Delpit see discussion – amongst a variety of other pedagogical strategies and structural initiatives - as a conduit for promoting equality in the classroom amongst students coming from inequality.

Like Delpit and Freiré, Ladson-Billings (2003) advocates for educators who integrate knowledge construction, social hierarchies, and power into the classroom through both the formal curriculum (in addition to the “hidden curriculum”) and constructed lessons such as group-talks (Anyon, 1980). Ladson-Billings (2003), foundational speaking, emphasizes how the school system, and more specifically the formal curriculum, removes various narratives. This, subsequently, leaves out or marginalizes the cultures and histories of several groups composing such a pluralist society. Similarly, Anyon (1980) claims the hidden curriculum impacts historically marginalized students through “different curricular, pedagogical and pupil evaluation processes” (p. 13). Outside the scope of the school system, Ladson-Billings (1998) claims, “The ahistorical and acontextual nature of much law and other ’science’ renders the voices of dispossessed and marginalized group members mute” (p. 13). In this sense, those who are African-American (Epstein & Shiller, 2005), female (Crocco, 2001), Hispanic (Nieto, 2004) or one of many other groups are seen as receiving inferior treatment both inside and outside of schools in regards to both their narratives and - coinciding with this - their voices. To that end, Ladson-Billings argues that the classroom needs to provide students with opportunities for discussion initiated by educators for a
truly reformative, democratic classroom.

As a potential remedy to this situation, Ladson-Billings (1995) advocates for a form of teaching considered to be culturally responsive (Au, 2009). In other words, Ladson-Billings advocates for educators who integrate the community into the classroom allowing “students to succeed academically by building on background knowledge and experiences gained in the home and community” (Au, 2009, p. 179). As Au (2009) notes, “Culturally responsive instruction resides firmly within a pluralist vision of society which recognizes that the cultures of different ethnic groups provide content worthy of inclusion in the curriculum” (p. 179). Ladson-Billings, given this objective, promotes the development of “community spaces” in the classroom where students can collaborate with one another (often through the use of discussion) and learn about public engagement and opportunities for equity. Such a context is reminiscent of the “public sphere” described by Habermas, though scaled-down to the classroom-level. Much like Dewey’s view on the integration of “miniature communities,” Ladson-Billings seeks to provide an environment where students better understand their role as a citizen in a democracy contingent on and grounded in pluralism through the simulation of similar processes in the classroom.

Expanding on Dewey, however, Ladson-Billings (1995) mirrors the aims of Banks, Freiré, and Delpit by claiming such a space should be used to teach students about power, society, and the foundation of knowledge. Ladson-Billings sees the classroom as a place for students to reverse social injustices by learning both about such occurrences and the role they play in correcting such issues. And, like many of the aforementioned
scholars and theorists, Ladson-Billings argues this can [in part] be accomplished most efficiently and effectively in a collaborative environment where equitable relationships are built and knowledge is shared in a manner in which false narratives are rewritten and a curriculum provides fair opportunities for all students. Whereas Habermas’s primary function for preparing students to enter into the public sphere was to develop ability to participate in the political system, the aforementioned theorists seek more to create teachers who prepare active citizens to transform society and promote various forms of equity.

Like Freiré, Ladson-Billings, and Delpit, Oakeshott (1962) similarly philosophizes about conversation and discussion as a means toward social justice. In Oakeshott’s view, the more one participates in thorough discussions with multiple parties in a pluralist environment (such as the classroom), the more they come to acknowledge voices that are discounted, disenfranchised, and devalued. These experiences will ideally lead to participants working toward incorporating these voices into the discourse in the public sphere (Preskill, 1997). Oakeshott refers to the whole of society in saying that the more citizens interact with historically marginalized groups and surface their subordination, the more they seek to promote equity within society (Preskill, 1997). However, his broader writings reflect the views of Delpit, Banks, Ladson-Billings, and Freiré, as each sees discussion as a means for preparing students and citizens to both to enter into a society where knowledge is constructed and seek social justice regardless of their current status in society.

Likewise, in Allport’s influential piece *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954), he claims
that a proper classroom has the potential to promote social justice and eliminate discrimination and prejudice, which he sees as developing in students as young as ten years old. In a manner similar to the aforementioned scholars, Allport sees discussion through collaboration as a means to seeking equality and the quelling of prejudices and dominance. Allport, as cited by Banks (2002), says discussion in schools having such aims should consist of three key components: 1) cooperation over competitiveness, 2) a sense of equality amongst participants, 3) facilitated by authorities such as parents, teachers, or administrators. Allport – who served as an influence for both Banks and Parker – reflects the oft-referenced aims of a classroom simulating larger society in an ideal sense where ideas are freely exchanged, equality is achieved, and collaboration assists individuals in achieving various forms of growth (Parker, 2003).

It should be noted – however, that such forms of group-talk rarely occur in the classroom. As Flynn (2009) notes, “The norms of traditional classroom discussions—dominant speakers and a limited view of active participation—are far from benign; their lasting effects can be detrimental to both individual students and wider society” (p. 2002). In other words, Flynn asserts that the discussion often occurring in the classroom – often involves dominant speakers whose voices overshadow those of their peers and directly influence the views the subordinated students have toward the value of their own voice. Practically speaking, Flynn argues discussions occurring in classrooms often are inherently flawed and continue to play into theories of social reproduction and subordination of marginalized groups. Moreover, the teachers facilitating discussions view their pedagogy as aligning with theories of democratic and multicultural education
despite narratives being forgotten, voices being subordinated, and different perspectives viewed as wrong.

Despite Flynn’s exploration into what may occur throughout the traditional classroom discussion, the classroom maintains a potential for collaborative, discussion-based efforts that one would be hard-pressed to find outside of the school. Because of this, scholars consistently produce literature regarding how teachers can achieve such aims of promoting advocacy, reform-oriented action, engagement, and a threshold of knowledge on current issues and democratic processes. The following sections of the current theoretical framework seek to describe how scholars describe these aims within the social studies.

*The Role of the Social Studies.*

Though all of the aforementioned aims can and should be incorporated into each content-area and their respected disciplines, scholars often note how the social studies has the primary responsibility of including an issues-based education relying on discussion and collaborative efforts (Avery, 2003; Bickmore, 2008; Hertzberg, 1981; Kahne, Rodriguez, Smith, & Thiede, 2000). Hahn (1999), more specifically, states “since the 1890’s, the school subject called ‘social studies’ has been designated to play a key role in citizenship preparation” (p. 586). Hahn, like many scholars of the social studies, claims the opportunities offered to students of the social studies make it and its respected disciplines (e.g., geography, history, civics, government) primed to assist students in demonstrating the civic skills and knowledge to become participatory and informed citizens in a pluralist society. Cuenca (2010) mirrors such a sentiment by claiming the
social studies classroom has the potential for “preparing our students to improve on society and recognize the unrealized potential of democracy shrouded by authority and hegemony” (p. 47). Avery (2003) similarly notes, “the major responsibility for providing explicit civics instruction and experiences rests with the social studies curricula” (p. 1).

Like Hahn (1999), Cuenca (2010), and Hertzberg (1981), Parker (2010) notes the social studies “is at the center of a good school curriculum because it is where students learn to see and interpret the world ---its people, places, cultures, systems, and problems; its dreams and calamities---now and long ago” (p. 3). At its foundation, Parker’s vision for the social studies involves each of the separate disciplines in the social studies providing students with an array of opportunities for discussion through the issue-based education advocated for by Hess (2009) and Hahn (1999). Much like Parker, Knowles and Theobald (2013) claim the “social studies, perhaps more than other fields, has the potential to enhance the development of critical thinking skills, civic capabilities, and historical reasoning among students” (p. 102). Collectively, the field of education seems to have come to the consensus that though all content-areas work toward creating effective citizens, the social studies has the primary responsibility of teaching how to be a citizen within a pluralist society.

Prominent scholars in the field of social studies have adopted this calling by making it the focal point of leading organization in the social studies (the National Council for the Social Studies). In the organization’s most recent iteration of their position statement, the framers note that:

As Thomas Jefferson, Horace Mann, John Dewey and other great educators
understood, public schools do not serve a public so much as create a public. The goal of schooling, therefore, is not merely preparation for citizenship, but citizenship itself; to equip a citizenry with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for active and engaged civic life. The National Council for the Social Studies firmly agrees with this premise and believes that no other subject area is better suited to achieve this essential goal in schools than the social studies. (NCSS Board of Directors, 2013)

The aim of developing informed, engaged, and empowered citizens, therefore, is one in which prominent social studies educators acknowledge as being both vital to the sustainability of a democracy and most likely achieved within the various disciplines of the social studies.

_Situating Discussion within the Social Studies._

One reason for the social studies often being placed on a pedestal for democratic and civic education are the various instructional strategies educators can integrate into the social studies classroom and its various disciplines. Such instructional strategies often lend themselves to the use of collaboration as a means for ensuring a democratic education where knowledge is constructed, various perspectives included, and critical thinking is developed. For instance, the use of primary and secondary sources as means for critical analysis remains a prominent theme in the literature on “best practices” within the social studies classroom (Hicks, Doolittle, & Lee, 2004; Jewett & Ackerman, 2013; Kobrin, 1996; Lesh, 2011). Such sources allow for students to construct both knowledge and understandings of historical and current events and issues in a manner allowing them
to take ownership of the content and critically think about various perspectives in an open-ended and fluid manner (Seixas, 1993). Hicks, Doolittle, and Lee (2003) describe primary sources as a way to “(a) prepare students to learn to think historically through doing historical inquiry and (b) develop young citizens who are capable of informed deliberative criticism” (p. 213). Critically analyzing sources teaches students to use rationality and evidence-based reasoning to construct content often seen as concrete within the social studies classroom and, therefore, aligns with many critical components comprising a democratic education (Alleman & Brophy, 1998; Banks, 1993; Doolittle & Hicks, 2003; Scheurman & Newmann, 1998).

Though the use of primary and secondary sources has inherent benefits to students of the social studies, the use of discussion as a pedagogical approach throughout the analysis of such sources has the potential to make such lessons exponentially more effective (Hicks, Doolittle, & Lee, 2003). When multiple students collaborate on an analysis of a primary or secondary source (be it an image, journal, clip, or news article), ideas are constructed and exchanged and perspectives are incorporated from outside of students’ own previous experiences and personal beliefs. Attaining such objectives within students’ learning and classroom experiences is critical to a democratic education and student growth in a manner preparing for their entrance into the public sphere. In this sense, a “best practice” of the social studies (critical analysis of either or primary or secondary source) is improved upon and more clearly associated with a proper democratic education through the use of discussion amongst students.

Similar, social studies teachers often require students to generate primary sources
(e.g., “journals”) with the aim of developing empathy and, informally speaking, “walk in someone else’s shoes.” Teachers, when using this instructional strategy, often assign a time period in which students must write a letter to or from the perspective of an individual living within another context and do so in a manner in which they submerge themselves within a completely different setting. Much like the analysis of primary and secondary sources, the generation of such assignments as a classroom activity has the potential for developing students into empathetic citizens (a frequent goal of democratic education).

Though writing a diary entry reflective of those written in another context can be beneficial on its own, it – like the critical analysis of sources – can also benefit extensively from the use of discussion amongst students to compare, contrast, and collaborate within the development of such pieces. In this sense, the fostering of a collaborative and reflective environment alongside the incorporation of such a pedagogical strategy adds an additional element of knowledge construction and multiple perspectives to a student’s classroom experience. Hearing other students’ perspectives and constructions also helps students consider the viewpoints of others and experience dialogue on an open-ended topic in which they can create their own interpretations. Allowing students to share their own interpretations in a collaborative and discursive manner will demonstrate to students how perspective matters and rarely do “capital-T Truths” exist within social studies content.

Discussion, therefore, situates itself within many of the best practices of the social studies by improving upon simulations and role-play, which have often been viewed as
means to increase student participation (Singer, 2008; Zevin, 2013). The use of simulation within the classroom, much like source analysis and development – has frequently been written about as a means of having students empathize with historical characters, critically think about key situations, and experience history in an active and engaging manner (Singer, 2008; Zevin, 2013). When engaged in either an historical or contemporary simulation framed around an open-ended issue, social studies students are expected to place themselves within a situation and, in essence, figure ways in which they would respond to the provided circumstances.

Much like the previously described instructional strategies, simulations in the social studies have inherent benefits for students in that they can promote critical thinking and teach knowledge construction. Gehlbach et al. (2008) found that “students’ participation in [a] simulation caused them to be more motivated, more interested, or to achieve more highly” (p. 908). However, there exist limits on such potential if such practices do not exist within a collaborative effort. The addition of such an environment has the potential to lead to the incorporation of variety of perspectives and ideas into an active, student-centered classroom which otherwise may have been missed. In the same manner in which Habermas views the public sphere as a place for ‘collective action’ on issues in society, collaboration within a simulation is a similar form of reasoning and action developed through a range of participants. And discursive practices - including discussion - amongst students are critical to this form of collaboration. Because simulations can lead to open-ended and fluid discussions in which there exists no true answer, simulations provide students with an opportunity to work together to better
understand various scenarios and the multiple conclusions that can be reached through collaboration.

A final – and broader - instructional strategy that scholars advocate for as part of a student’s social studies experience is that of using a project-based approach to construct concepts through inquiry within the disciplines of social studies (Bell, 2010; Singer, 2008). For instance, the developments of dioramas as a means for depicting a 3D model of an historical context is a well used and supported classroom practice meant to have students physically generate a model of a specific moment in history. Such an approach has the potential to engage students in creative and critical thinking. When paired with collaboration in the form of group-talk, can encourage students to accept new ideas and perspectives into their creation of a specific time period. The use of collaboration and discussion when envisioning and developing such a construction of a social studies topic can lead to the exchanging of perspectives and beliefs in a manner where a physical construction of a period in the social studies becomes the foundation for a progressive discussion reliant on evidence, source-analysis, and compromise.

Each of these forms of instruction can be made more effective when situated within the effective use of discussion in the social studies classroom. Each of the aforementioned instructional strategies, however, can be effective when grounded in the various disciplines of the social studies. In this sense, discussion situates itself within both the social studies as a broad component of the school system as well as the various instructional strategies advocated for by educational scholars. A teacher using discussion appropriately increases the potential for such strategies within the classroom. Discussion
promotes the collaborative efforts advocated by Dewey (1916) leading to growth of students through educative, reflective experiences and provides opportunities for students to gain the most in the form of citizenship from their classroom experiences. Whether through the use of primary source analysis, simulations and role-plays, journal writing, or one of several other instructional strategies, the use of discussion increases the likelihood for students to experience a democratic education within the social studies.

_Discussion in the Disciplines of the Social Studies._

Within the social studies, these instructional strategies are prominent and cross each of the separate disciplines. In history, for instance, the social studies can provide students with the opportunities to critically analyze primary and secondary sources for various perspectives, biases, and cultures (Epstein & Shiller, 2005). The study of history can also provide students with ample chances for meaningful, educative experience in which they discover how the generations before them lived, what such figures believed, and how society sustained itself during different time periods (Vansledright, 2004). Students of history can perform foundational comparative studies to see how society has changed (either for the better or for worse) at various points in history. In this sense, photographs, videos, journals, and other forms of personal narrative can be used to engage students in historical thinking (Barton & LeVstik, 2003; Lesh, 2011; Vansledright, 2004).

Given such opportunities, history provides students with the ability to critique such textbooks and formal curriculums in a manner running parallel to the aims of Ladson-Billings (1995), Delpit (1998) and Freiré (1973) in terms of culturally relevant
and responsive pedagogy and critical pedagogy, respectively. Because history has no shortage of primary and secondary sources, teachers can integrate a variety of narratives into a history classroom and have students converse with one another through discussion on contrasting narratives, outdated beliefs, and democratic principles (Epstein & Shiller, 2005). For example, from the McGuffey Readers and subsequent textbooks of Rugg in the early twentieth century to the textbooks written by Woodson and similar historians, students of history have the potential to discuss the notions of knowledge construction as Banks (1993) describes in his work on multicultural education and how these views have developed throughout history.

Students, therefore, can not only learn how knowledge is constructed through dominant voices and varying perspectives, but also develop their own narratives based on individualized beliefs, experiences, and interpretations as well as collaborative efforts in which students discuss such constructions. Returning to the works of Delpit, Ladson-Billings, and Freiré, when teachers do use history to teach students to “think historically,” they can encourage students to challenge the status quo through critical analysis and collaborative efforts (Vansledright, 2004). Bickmore – in a manner relevant to the present conversation - claims “the task of social justice citizenship education is . . . to facilitate constructive questioning (deconstruction) of the sources, shape, and drives of that knowledge” (p. 157). Using history as a means to do this is practical and plausible for practicing teachers willing to engage their students in various forms of critical thinking and collaborative efforts.

Similarly, another discipline of the social studies, political science, offers a
variety of opportunities for “growth” (in Dewey’s vision) through collaboration in the form of discussion. Because political science grounds itself in the study of local, state, and national governments, it, too, provides students with the ability to learn about how a democracy functions and the role of a citizen within such an institution (e.g., laws, checks-and-balances, citizens’ rights). Political science courses can transform students into participatory citizens who can “research issues, deliberate collectively, work collaboratively, and lobby appropriate government offices.” (Boyle-Baise, 2001, p. 53).

Returning to Habermas’s notions of the public sphere, the political sciences serve as an ideal location for students of diverse backgrounds and beliefs to better understand how their voice impacts society and the views and dispositions of those around them through discussions on current events and issues, the political and public sphere, and various democratic processes.

Such a notion of educating students about government and its reliability on its populace is not new to the field of education. As far back as 1779, Jefferson even went so far as to say the public school system should educate people so “[the] laws are best, and are best administered, and that laws will be wisely formed, and honestly administered, in proportion as to those who form and administer them are wise and honest” (p. 87). In other words, Jefferson believed a society must have an educated citizenry to critique and improve upon laws and those in power. Despite Jefferson having written such an opinion well over 200 years ago, the United States still relies (at least in theory) on a populace who votes on laws and upholds the Constitution. And though the vast majority of secondary-aged students are yet of voting age, the political science course is an ideal
setting for students to learn about the current laws in addition to how and who develops and enacts them. Discussion on such topics can, once again, enlighten students to the views of others, eliminate ignorance toward the democratic process, and assist students in simulating discursive practices (Parker, 2003).

But discussion in such a discipline must also extend outside of local and national issues. In recent decades – with new technologies increasing globalization – the world has become more interconnected and, therefore, the scholars have argued that students must begin to discuss issues falling under the umbrella of “political science” within a global context (Zong, Wilson, & Quashiga, 2008). In this sense, it becomes not about what it takes to be a “citizen of the United States,” but, rather, a “citizen of the world.” (Avery, 2003; Merryfield, 2001; Zong, Wilson, & Quashiga, 2008). Discussion can be used to foster this form of global-thinking about issues ranging from climate change, international trade, foreign diplomacy, gender equality migration, and epidemics through the incorporation of diverse views which have varying understandings and beliefs toward an array of international affairs (Crocco, 2001; Merryfield, 2001). Students, therefore, have the opportunity to participate in the foundational components to a democratic, pluralist society as a nationalized-citizen in addition to simulating their role as a global citizen in the context of the twenty-first century.

Given such ideals, political science allows students to discuss relevant issues relating directly to their lives in a manner in which Hess (2009) and Hahn (1999) would see as essential to a meaningful, educative classroom experience. In this sense, scholars of the social studies detail how students can listen to one another and hear an array of
vastly differing opinions on several sensitive subjects. The ideal components of equity and equality within a democracy – collaboration, compromise, and diversity – can all be integrated into the political science classroom in a manner reminiscent to a true democracy.

Geography, much like history and political science, is, too, a strong forum for students to discuss various constructions often times considered to be “fact.” For instance, Bednarz, Acheson, and Bednarz (2006) argue one facet of geography, the use of maps, is as much a social construction as the retelling of history or the presentation of political issues. More specifically, they claim “both in the selectivity of their content and in their signs and styles of representation, maps are a way of conceiving, articulating, and structuring the human world which is biased towards, promoted by, and exerts influence upon particular sets of human relations” (p. 403). Considering this, an educator can and should use geography – much like history and political science classes – to engage students in an on-going, critical discourse regarding social equality and equity and knowledge construction. And teachers can encourage students to participate in meaningful, critical discussion in a manner running parallel to the effective use of discussion in the classroom. More specifically, educators can ask students to seek out and discuss potential biases present in maps and other common forms of geography,

Outside of the social justice and critical lenses toward geography, providing students with a fluid picture of geography can increase engagement. Much like with the other disciplines in the social studies, scholars claim students often see geography as a set of facts to remember and recite on an exam (Barton & Levstik, 2003; Bednarz, Acheson,
& Bednarz, 2006; Segall & Helfenbein, 2008). Given this, the use of discussion (and other forms of collaboration) can serve to make geography “come alive” and serve as a meaningful venture for students of the social studies. When discussion is grounded in critical and controversial matters (both of which exist within geographic studies), students can gain more than simply knowledge on where a city may be located or where a war may have occurred. Rather, students can better understand the role cartographers play in the development of maps and, to return to Banks’s (1993) claims of knowledge construction, how such individuals impact what is learned and known about various locations (Bednarz et al., 2006). Therefore, discussion can serve as a means for students to engage one another in such critical discourse where discussion serves as a catalyst for a larger, more applicable understanding of geography and each component to its vast field.

Despite this literature review only serving to describe discussion’s place in a few of the many disciplines of the social studies (leaving out sociology, psychology, philosophy, and economics, for instance), those unmentioned also have a space for the type of relevant, educative, and critical form of education advocated for by political theorists and educational scholars alike. In other words each discipline in the social studies [when taught properly] has the potential to use various forms of pedagogy (including discussion) to assist students to enter into the public and political sphere. Discussion can assist teachers in making content applicable to students and adaptive in nature. Further, the social studies is not the only area of a students’ schooling in which they receive civic education; however, the area and its disciplines to carry a stronger
burden given the capabilities afforded to students of the social studies (Hahn, 1999).

In sum, educational scholars and political theorists alike differ greatly on what they believe to be the primary expectations and objectives of the school system and, in specific, the social studies (Evans, 2004; Ross & Marker, 2005; Stanley, 2005). However, the aim for a democratic education grounded in an issue-based environment promoting growth through collaboration and group-talk appears to have most rational thinkers in agreement (NCSS, 2010). And given the extensive body of literature detailing the necessity for educated citizens who are capable of participating in various forms of group-talk, it becomes easy to see where discussion falls in the role of the school (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). The social studies (and the school system of the United States, at large) has a responsibility to prepare students to enter a pluralist society through meaningful, reflective, and collaborative efforts in the classroom; ones in which Dewey (1916) refers to as “educative experiences.” And one pedagogical approach capable of achieving this is teaching students how to participate in formal discussion with one another.

To borrow the eloquent words of Preskill (1997) “If the promise of democracy as a school for citizens is finally to be realized, then educators must provide frequent opportunities for students to exchange ideas in a variety of settings with diverse groups of participants” (p. 317). The use of discussion in a progressive and critical manner can engage students in meaningful and relevant topics (Vansledright, 2009), teach students about how knowledge is constructed (Banks, 1993; Delpit, 1998), prepare students for discourse in the public sphere (Macedo, 2004; Habermas, 1989), and simply serve to
motivate students to take ownership in the material they are presented with in the curriculum (King, Newmann, Carmichael, 2009). Given such benefits and potential to using discussion, teachers must be versed both on the theories justifying the use of discussion as well as the various pedagogical approaches meant to foster a nurturing and inviting environment for all students (Flynn, 2009). Once such a setting has been created, educators can then strive toward fulfilling the oft-referenced aims of a democratic education discussed by the leading organizations, philosophers, political theorists, and educational scholars.

It should be noted, however, that it is not exclusively in the social studies where these aims are to be achieved within the classroom. Rather – and as stated in the introduction of this chapter – the United States’ school system as a whole has consistently been charged by scholars, parents, politicians and every other major demographic comprising society with the responsibility of fostering such an education that fosters the ideal citizen. Parker (2003), broadly and eloquently argues:

[Educators are] the primary stewards of democracy [because] they must do what no one else in society has to do: intentionally specify the democratic ideal sufficiently to make it a reasonably distinct curriculum target, one that will justify selecting from the universe of possibilities a manageable set of subject matters, materials, instructional methods, modes of classroom interactions and school experiences. (p. xvii)

Parker’s emphasis on the word “educators” is critical, as he makes it clear that it is not one discipline, one content area, or one grade level which is expected to foster the often-
referenced aims of a democratic education. Instead, it is “educators” as a whole from all fields attempting to ensure the development of effective educators.

II. Literature Review in Teacher Education

In an unpublished paper presented at the annual conference for the American Educational Research Association, Dinkelman (1999) questions to what extent preservice social studies teachers internalize and understand the oft-referenced theories and ideals of democratic education. Dinkelman, therefore, wonders if preservice teachers in social studies education understand the aims of the social studies as advocated for by the National Council for the Social Studies and prominent scholars in the field of education and understand their role in achieving such objectives. Ultimately, Dinkelman describes the three participants in his study (who were preservice elementary teachers enrolled in a social studies methods course) as “View[ing] themselves as teachers, in a general sense more than they viewed themselves as social studies teachers” (p. 3; emphasis in original). He continues by claiming “the idea of social studies as a form of democratic civic education, a strong focus of their teacher preparation program never took root as an influential part of their personal theories of teaching” (p. 3). Dinkelman notes that the participants in his study rarely integrated pedagogical approaches aligning themselves with democratic principles into their field experiences and, when they did, it was in an attempt to be “fun” or “engaging,” as opposed to a transformative or reform-oriented.

In a similar manner, Barton (2012) – while reflecting on his preservice social studies teachers - claims:

My own students, future social studies teachers from cities and towns speckled
across the Midwest, have admirable reasons for wanting to teach—从 developing children’s potential, to making them feel valued, to providing role models. But there is one thing they never say, at least not at the beginning of their program: no one wants to become a teacher to improve democracy. They are not alone. The reasons people have for becoming teachers are remarkably consistent, and while most of those reasons are commendable, they are not necessarily relevant to preparing students for democratic participation. (p. 167)

Dinkelman and Barton’s questioning of the associations preservice social studies make regarding democratic education served as the catalyst and inspiration for the present research study. Such claims raised questions regarding preservice social studies teachers’ identities. More specifically, I began to question the extent to which preservice social studies teachers viewed themselves specifically as social studies teachers whose aims for the classroom were content-specific and related to broad principles of democratic education.

Additionally, their claims led to a thorough review of the research in teacher education detailing to what extent preservice teachers (in all content-areas) connect their practices to popular theories of democratic education. What ultimately surfaced from this literature review was the fact that the vast majority of research previously published in teacher education is framed around advocacy, rather than exploration. Limited research, therefore, has been conducted on the extent to which preservice social studies teachers internalize theories of democratic education into their intentions for teaching (Bickmore, 2008; Levstik & Tyson, 2008).
In this sense, there exists a lack of empirical research detailing the dispositions of preservice teachers in regards to pedagogy and democratic principles of education. Adler (2008) asserts the present body of literature in social studies education offers minimal research to support the specific forms of teacher education most successful toward achieving the aim of developing citizens capable of living, working, and participating in a pluralist democracy contingent on its populace. Adler notes “few studies can be found that provide us with an over-arching view of the current state of social studies teacher education” (p. 333). Therefore, research has proven the effectiveness of teacher education (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Vanhover, 2008), but has yet to discover the specific means for effectively preparing preservice social studies teachers in regards to the NCSS standards (and the organization’s positions statement posed in the previous section) or the perspectives and conceptions of preservice teachers (Adler, 2008). Because of this, the research detailing preservice social studies teachers’ experiences in teacher education programs and understandings of the field and its broad aims and objectives – as listed in the previous section of this chapter - is limited, at best (Doppen, 2007).

In the past four decades, however, the field of education has taken notice of this need to better understand teacher preparation and, subsequently, begun to produce an array of empirical research on effective teacher education and the aim of developing teachers who are strong and autonomous decision-makers (Adler, 2008). Cochran-Smith (2005), for instance, claims that in the past forty-years the field of teacher education has sought to develop an evidence-based approach to its research meant to “unlock the ‘black box’ of teacher education, turn the lights on inside it, and shine spotlights into its corners,
rafters, and floorboards” (p. 8). The remainder of this literature review attempts to synthesize and describe the empirical studies having been conducted within this past four decades with a specific focus on social studies teacher education programs and the preservice social studies teachers who go through such programs. I also detailed the published research on preservice social studies teachers’ beliefs, practices, and conceptions of democratic education and – where available – their conceptualizations of discussion within the social studies classroom.

Specific to social studies teacher preparation programs, Dumas’s (1993) extensive review of social studies teacher education is the most recent of this kind. Completed over two decades before the present study, Dumas’s findings led him to claim the majority of social studies teacher education programs do associate themselves with the National Council for the Social Studies and the organization’s stated aims for a democratic education emphasizing the fostering of tolerant, engaged, and informed citizens. However, Dumas also found most of the preservice teachers taking part in his research and entering into the field had deficiencies in their understanding of the aims of NCSS. Dumas also found a gap in teacher education programs’ preparation of preservice teachers in that limited pedagogical practices were presented that may foster the aims of a truly democratic education within the social studies classroom (e.g., discussion, critical thinking, source analysis). Dumas claims the ten strands comprising the organization’s purpose statement do serve as a foundation for how most teacher educators’ structure social studies education programs, but novice social studies teachers often enter into the classroom without the ability or knowledge for how to achieve such aims or a true
understanding of such objectives (Dumas, 1993).

More broadly, Avery’s (2003b) study on civic education in teacher education seeks to discover how teacher education programs (specifically in the social studies) prepare preservice teachers to uphold NCSS’s oft-referenced aims of a democratic education. Upon a number of findings, Avery claims preservice teachers need more direction and experience teaching with and for citizenship in their teacher education programs (a sentiment which Dinkelman, Dumas, and Boyle-Baise & Kilbane would likely support). Though Avery provides a number of recommendations, the one most relevant to this conversation revolves around her thoughts on discussion. In brief, Avery’s findings suggest the preservice teachers she studied remained unprepared to foster and conduct discussions among secondary students upon graduating and entering into the field as professional educator (and, thus, needed the opportunity to practice in their own methods courses). More specifically, Avery claims to have seen little evidence of where preservice teachers had the opportunity to learn about and practice conducting discussion amongst either peers or secondary students and, thus, appeared less likely to do so as an in-service teacher. Though this finding sheds little light on how preservice social studies teachers conceptualize discussion, it does assist the field in understanding why the use of discussion within the social studies classroom is such a rare occurrence (as seen in Cornbleth, 2002; Nystrand, et al., 1997).

More broadly, Goodman & Adler’s (1985) study exploring preservice elementary teachers conceptions of the social studies details how participants placed the social studies as a subject in the school system of the United States in six categories: social
studies as a “non-subject”, human relations, citizenship, school knowledge, the great connection, and social justice. Regardless of which category the participants associated themselves with (though the authors are quick to point out they the categories are neither mutually exclusive nor static), the preservice teachers in the study largely failed to associate practices of democratic education in their field placement and coursework. In other words, the preservice teachers mostly associated classroom practices with theories far removed from the general themes discussed in the literature.

Crowe, Hawley and, Brooks (2012) explored the perspectives of 19 preservice social studies teachers in a way that delved into how their experiences in schools as students affected their perceptions of the traditional social studies teacher. Like Goodman & Adler, Crowe, Hawley, and Brooks found that the participants created five categories for the social typical social studies teacher: information giver, content knowledge expert, “character”, caring and committed, “powerful”. Again reflecting the findings of Goodman & Adler, the authors found that the conceptions preservice social studies teachers had of in-service social studies teachers was disconnected from the ideals of democratic education as advocated for by scholars, teacher-educators, and policymakers alike.

Similarly, Mathews and Dilworth (2008) found their own preservice social studies teachers were reluctant to critically analyze their own understandings, experiences, and assumptions in regards to multicultural citizenship education. The authors discovered how their participants (who were mostly white) made claims mirroring the broad aims of the National Council for the Social Studies, but were less likely to incorporate such
pedagogical approaches leading to equity in their own classrooms on account of a limited amount of critical self-reflection. Instead the authors note how, “even with clear expectations and integrated curricula in place, white preservice teachers are still uncomfortable dealing with race and confronting their own privilege” (p. 384). Mathews and Dilworth’s findings reflect the foundational justifications for the present study, as they – like Dinkelman – found that preservice social studies teachers rarely internalize the critical theories of democratic education or incorporate such theories into their own practice.

In a similar manner, Kubow (1997) surveyed 147 preservice social studies teachers to discover their attitudes toward and conceptions of civic education in the twenty-first century. Reflecting Barton’s (2012) analysis of his preservice teachers, Kubow found her preservice teachers only had a vague and limited understanding of what true citizenship actually entails and how it could be taught in the classroom. More specifically, Kubow notes, “For most of the students interviewed, the concept of citizenship education is quite vague and indistinct” (p. 20). The lofty objectives and complex notions of democratic education as put forth by social studies education scholars and political theorists alike, therefore, failed to resonate within the preservice social studies teachers in Kubow’s study. The participants were unable to develop or describe a clear picture of the foundations of citizenship and democratic education to inform their own rationales of teaching.

Similarly, Wilkins (1999) surveyed 669 preservice teachers in the United Kingdom and found, in a manner reflective of Kubow’s results, preservice teachers have
a limited understanding of what democratic and citizenship education entails and that “there was much confusion over what it means to be 'a good citizen’” (p. 217). Though the definition of a “good citizen” is one that is both up for debate and frequently evolving (Boyle-Baise, 2003), Wilkins’ findings of preservice teachers developing vague constructions of “good” citizens reflects the aforementioned studies detailing the conceptions preservice social studies teachers have of democratic and citizenship education.

In his dissertation, Alfano (2001) found that of his 11 participants in a multi-case study analysis looking into preservice teachers’ understandings of teaching in an urban setting, two themes emerged regarding what democratic education was to each of the participants: 1) a term related to government or politics, and 2) a term transcending politics to include ideas ranging from equality, equity, fairness, individuality, freedom, and fairness. Alfano found that his 11 participants all stated the necessity for integrating broad themes of democratic education into the social studies classroom. Though intriguing findings and certainly uplifting to read, Alfano’s study is limited in how it measures preservice teachers notions of democratic education. More specifically, the research provided limited evidence regarding the internalizing of democratic education amongst the participants. In other words, Alfano’s study lacked a focus specifically on how the participants in his study connected democratic education into the classroom (though this research likely existed outside the scope of his study).

Marshall (2004) took a similar approach though with an emphasis on preservice elementary teachers and, specifically, their views on teaching the social studies (a subject
they were not majoring in, but were required to take a course in for their coursework). Marshall uses an interview case-study approach to investigate “initial and developing ideas of teaching elementary social studies overtime” (p. iv). Marshall ultimately finds that prior experiences in the social studies impact the ways in which preservice teachers view the subject and intend on teaching it (reflecting Lortie’s 1975 theory of “apprenticeship of observation”). However, she also notes that these views – though relevant – are fluid and subject to change. In this sense, Marshall found her participant’s conceptions toward the social studies changed throughout the course of her three-month study and that that the issues the preservice teachers faced throughout their student teaching placement often prevented or limited the transfer of these newfound beliefs into practice. In her own words, Marshall describes how “the findings suggest that prior experiences with social studies do affect a preservice teacher’s ideas on the subject, but that those ideas are subject to change, that learning to teach involves a host of unique challenges that can affect the outcome of any given case; and the uncertainty with learning how to teach does not necessarily translate into how student teachers actually perform in the classroom” (pp. iv-v). Marshall found that preservice elementary teachers conceptions of democratic education were complex and constantly evolving based on both previous and new experiences in the field of education.

More recently, Pryor (2006) conducted a study amongst 27 preservice teachers as they transitioned through their first year of in-service teaching. Pryor discovered four themes among the participants: 1) they remembered the broad aims and ideals of democratic education, 2) they recognized the value of democratic education in enhancing
their teaching, 3) they recognized the value of democratic education in enhancing students’ learning, and 4) they want strategies for democratic education to be modeled for them throughout their methods courses. Pryor’s study is key in this sense in that it demonstrates how preservice teachers all value democratic principles of education in the classroom, but are often unsure or unclear on how to implement such strategies into their classroom practice.

Finally, Doerre-Ross and Yeager (1999) conducted a qualitative study in which they explored the written reflections of preservice social studies teachers in an elementary education program. Much like Kubow and Wilkins, the authors described their participants as having limited understandings of democratic and citizenship education (and democratic processes as a whole). Specifically, the authors claimed that they “rated 3 papers high, 8 moderate, and 18 low in terms of demonstrated knowledge and understanding of democratic processes and principles” (p. 259). Such findings, therefore, reflect the findings of the previously discussed research on social studies preservice teachers’ conceptions of democratic and civic education.

Ultimately, several critical themes appear in this literature review regarding democratic education, the social studies, and teacher education. First and foremost, preservice social studies teachers often do not possess the needed dispositions and understandings of democratic education upon graduating from proper teacher education programs. Their conceptions, in other words, are often vague and unrelated to principles of social justice, equity, and equality. The present literature review surfaces the knowledge that preservice social studies teachers often graduate from their teacher education programs with limited understandings of democratic and citizenship education.
education programs without a strong understanding of how to incorporate progressive strategies for democratic and civic education into their own classrooms. Finally, the current literature review implicitly surfaces the lack of research describing specific pedagogical approaches (e.g., discussion) and preservice teachers' views and conceptions toward them within the classroom.

What is missing from this growing body of literature, however, is an empirical study which explores preservice teachers' conceptions of democratic education and – specific to this conversation, discussion - in a manner which goes beyond analysis of rationales and interview responses. The literature often takes students “at their word” and assumes that the responses preservice teachers provide in interviews and course assignments reflects their true beliefs, as opposed to being a simple recitation of required readings or instructors’ stated rationales for the social studies. Adler (1984) notes, “no simple dichotomy can capture the complexity of actual perspectives, nor their dynamic quality” (p. 28). In other words, Adler recognizes that the body of literature in existence is limited in its depth on how preservice teachers associate their practice with the aims of a democratic education and advocates for a new form of research grounded in robust, rich data which provides clear understandings of how preservice teachers think about the field in both a theoretical and practice-based sense.

III. Linking Democratic Education, Discussion, and Teacher Education

The previous two sections, collectively, demonstrate the importance of conducting research within teacher education on preservice social studies teachers’ conceptions of discussion. More specifically, several questions must be explored by scholars about
teacher education, the social studies, and discussion as a means for democratic education. The first line of inquiry needing attention is the extent to which preservice social studies internalize theories of democratic education. Secondly, scholars must explore how teacher education programs can increase the likelihood of their social studies preservice teachers both developing an understanding of democratic education and integrating it within their own classrooms. Finally, the previous two sections beg the question of how teacher education programs can best help preservice teachers situate the use of discussion within their plans for teaching in the K-12 classroom.

One of the most prevalent findings within the field of teacher education over the past four decades is the positive impact the completion of an accredited teacher education program typically has on in-service teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Cutsforth, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007; Doppen, 2007; Van Hover, 2010). Scholars claim formal training programs improve teachers’ confidence, competency, and pedagogy and, subsequently, the achievement of students taught by graduates of teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Specific to the present study and its emphasis on social studies teacher education programs, a social studies teacher education program has the potential to foster dominate themes of democratic education within preservice social studies teachers’ thinking regarding their pedagogical decision-making (Marshall, 2004). However, there has yet to be a study exploring how this can and should be done.

The effectiveness of such programs has been supported by an array of scholarly, empirical-based work. For instance, Doppen, similar to many of the aforementioned
studies, conducted a case study of 19 preservice social studies teachers in 2007 to discover how a typical social studies teacher education program impacted the practices and philosophies of preservice teachers. Of his four key findings, the one most pertinent to this conversation is that the preservice teachers studied entered into the program with few understandings of social studies education (which reflects Marshall’s findings). Doppen (2007) claims “the participants in this study entered their teacher preparation program without any strong prior beliefs about teaching and learning social studies other than the notion there had to be a better way than direct instruction” (p. 61). Doppen implies that the preservice social studies teachers were, essentially, “blank slates” who did not need their conceptions of teaching social studies to be altered; rather, they needed them to be constructed. Reflecting the work of Liston and Zeichner (1991), Doppen found that the participants did have ideas toward education, broadly speaking, but their notions and perspectives toward the social studies specifically could be crafted due to their lack of understanding of the field as a whole. Such a finding is reflective of Barton’s previous statement regarding how his own preservice teachers never described their reasons for entering into a career of teaching the social studies in a manner aligning with the aims of the National Council for the Social Studies or the aforementioned scholars of education. In this sense, the preservice teachers working with Doppen entered the program as malleable educators capable of developing an understanding of democratic education without having to redefine previous conceptions.

Teacher education, therefore, has the potential of improving both the ways in which preservice teachers define the aims of a democratic education and their intentions
for discussion into K-12 classrooms (in an attempt to achieve such objectives). Because preservice teachers have limited knowledge on the broad theories of education, teacher education programs can develop educators who understand the justification for attaining a truly democratic education through various forms of group talk and have a progressive and practical understanding of how to do so (Cutsforth, 2010; Dinkelman, 1999; Giroux & McLaren 1986; Pryor, 2006). Further, teacher education programs must emphasize to preservice teachers the role of discussion in the larger context of democratic education (Dinkelman, 1999). Doing so can help ensure the development of preservice teachers who habitually place discussion as a pedagogical approach in the context of democratic education, as opposed to simply an engaging experience for secondary social studies students (Dinkelman, 1999).

This is similarly reflected in Cutsforth’s (2010) dissertation in which her findings indicate that teacher education programs can have a positive influence on preservice social studies teachers’ beliefs toward the teaching of social studies. In her dissertation, Cutsforth (2010) notes how three social studies methods courses positively altered participants’ beliefs and understandings specifically regarding their teaching concerning:

Understandings about teaching social studies might change during secondary social studies methods courses, particularly concerning their understandings about history subject matter as a space for critical analysis and interpretation, the role of primary documents in the teaching of social studies, connections between social studies education and citizenship education, curriculum as characterized by themes and objectives, student-
centered pedagogy that encourages social interaction, and developing
instruction for diverse learners. (p. iv)

The teacher education program described by Cutsforth directly influenced how preservice
teachers conceptualize the practice of social studies teaching and, therefore, demonstrated
the potential of social studies teacher education programs in altering the ways in which
preservice teachers associate the social studies with democratic education. And, as Saye
& Brush (2004) note “teachers’ beliefs or philosophy about the mission of social studies
and history teaching may affect the choices they make toward didactic or more
empowering teaching” (p. 351). Given this belief, preservice teachers have the potential
to develop ideal notions and understandings of democratic education within their teacher
education programs.

Connecting the practices of democratic education, discussion, and teacher
education, therefore, is critical to the education of K-12 students. Nystrand, Gamoran,
and Carbonaro (1998) conducted a longitudinal study on the practices of high school
social studies and English teachers in the United States. Most telling of their findings was
the simple fact that:

On average, discussion [in secondary classrooms] took less than 15 seconds a day in
English, and about 30 seconds in social studies classes. In English classes, 61.1% of
all classes had no discussion at all, and only 5.6% had more than a minute daily; only
1 class of the 54 averaged more than 2 minutes. Similarly in social studies, 62.5% of
the classes had no discussion at all, 10.4% had more than one minute daily, and only
4.2%, or 3 classes, averaged more than 2 minutes per day. (p. 14)
This finding is troubling given the role that discussion plays in achieving the aims of democratic education. If over 80% of social studies classroom are not providing students with forums for discussion for more than a few minutes each day, the field of education needs to both explore and discover why such practices occur so rarely for K-12 students.

In sum, there still exists “little, in a comprehensive way, about the nature of the programs in which preservice social studies teachers are involved” (Adler, 2008, p. 334). Further, there exists even less information on what preservice social studies teachers experience in terms of course requirements by teacher education programs, content teacher educators emphasize, methods incorporated into social studies programs, or the experiences preservice teachers have in field experiences (Adler, 2009; Doppen, 2007; Schussler, 2006). Though outside of the scope of the present study, such information would assist in better understanding the thinking of preservice social studies teachers and why democratic forms of pedagogy are not incorporated into the K-12 social studies classroom more frequently.

Specific to discussion, there exists limited research on preservice teachers’ use of discussion as a pedagogical approach throughout their teacher education program’s accompanying field experience. What is clear, however, is that, “Preparing teachers to lead authentic dialogue and facilitate dissenting points of view requires making them more aware of the paradoxical nature of the field” (McMurray, 2010, p. 54). Thus, for the field to continue to evolve, research needs to focus on specific methods (e.g., discussion) and how teacher education programs can foster preservice teachers’ ability to conduct such pedagogy in the classroom. To borrow the words of Adler (2008), “We need to
move beyond ideological disputes, such as social studies vs. the disciplines, and examine what social studies teacher candidates know about their teaching field(s) and what difference this makes to their teaching” (p. 334). In other words, “Rather than focusing on our own conceptions of what social studies education should be, we need to put more effort into understanding the perspectives toward social studies education that students develop during their professional preparation” (Goodman & Adler, 1985).

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have argued for the need to develop citizens capable of using various forms of group-talk (including discussion) as a means to becoming participatory, informed, and rational citizens. I have emphasized the role and responsibility of the school system of the United States in attaining this objective while emphasizing the ideals of growth as purposed by Dewey and collective action as described by Habermas. In doing this, I grounded the argument within the fields of political theory, sociology, and both general and social studies education. More specifically, the first portion of this chapter advocated for the use of discussion in the social studies classroom by detailing how and why the social studies and each of its disciplines lends itself to the fostering of a democratic education within the social studies.

Following this, I provided a review of the literature detailing the knowledge, dispositions, and beliefs of preservice social studies teachers. I argued that the research – though limited – does state the need for teacher education programs to better prepare preservice teachers to understand what democratic and civic education entail and how it can be achieved within the social studies classroom. Similarly, the present literature
review emphasized the need for additional research exploring the associations preservice social studies teachers make between discussion and the underlying principles of democratic education. To that end, I used the question of the extent to which preservice social studies teachers internalized theories of democratic education and applied them to their intentions for practice. I also argued teacher preparation programs with a knowledge of what preservice social studies teachers know would be better able to develop curricula and tailor programs to candidates’ dispositions.

In the next chapter, I describe the design for the present study, which seeks to expand on the literature detailing how preservice social studies teachers associate various notions in democratic education with the use of discussion in the classroom. In the chapters following the research methods and study design, the findings of the study and a discussion on the implications for both teacher preparation and social studies education are presented.
CHAPTER THREE: Research Designs and Methods

Introduction

Because this study sought to better understand individuals grappling with complex, abstract notions of democratic education and social studies education, a qualitative study design was used. Creswell (2007) defines qualitative research methods as a means to “study research problems inquiring into the meanings individuals groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 37). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) similarly describe qualitative research as "situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (p. 3). Qualitative research, therefore, allowed for the exploration into participants’ lives and the development of a more robust and context-specific understanding of their views and conceptions toward discussion as a pedagogical approach.

I chose to conduct a qualitative multi-case study given the rich, empirical data it would provide about the participants (Glesne, 2006; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). An objective of the present research study was to “tell the story” of my participants and, in another sense, understand who they were and how they conceptualized various components of democratic education, discussion, and – more broadly – the teaching of social studies. Such aims assisted in developing the research questions presented in chapter one and choosing case study as an appropriate approach. Yin (2009) asserts that the case study is an appropriate method for answering questions and achieving aims similar to those guiding this study in which the researcher cannot
manipulate behaviors and, instead, seeks to gain a thorough understanding of the cases without their natural contexts.

Having decided upon using the case study approach, Merriam’s (1998) “descriptive case study” was selected to represent the most thorough analysis of each participant as possible. Merriam notes that a case study completed using a descriptive method produces an end product that is “a rich, ‘thick’ description of the phenomenon under study” (p. 29). Merriam provides details on the development of a descriptive case study by noting descriptive case studies should “illustrate the complexities of a situation”, “show the influence of personalities on the issue”, “show the influence the passage of time on the issue”, “include vivid material”, and “obtain information from a wide variety of sources” (pp. 30-31). Because my research sought to provide a thorough, descriptive analysis of a single phenomenon, the most fitting form of case study was to conduct a descriptive case study.

Prior to designing my study, I searched for a formal method to use while conducting my research. I used Yin’s (2009) three broad stages of case study research, “Define and Design”, “Prepare, Collect, and Analyze”, and “Analyze and Conclude” to add rigor and guide my study as it was taking place. In other words, a carefully designed study in which each stage is thoroughly developed and reflected upon in regards to the aims and objectives of the research question would promote a more rigorous study and more definitive and evidence-based conclusions.

This was to increase the rigor of my research and secure the reliability and validity of my findings (Yin, 2009). Stake (1995) claims “in our search both for accuracy
and alternative explanations, we need discipline, we need protocols which do not depend on mere intuition and good intention to ‘get it right’ (p. 107). Yin (2009) provides the protocol seen in figure 1 as a strategy for improving the rigor of conducting a case study. Using such a protocol sought to ensure a rigorous study by developing clearly defined stages within the study, which have been proven to enhance case study planning and implementation (Yin, 2009). Thus, the following steps were followed to organize and analyze the vast amounts of data collected and establish logical conclusions through a formalized study design.

![Case Study Method](image)

**Figure 1: Yin's Case Study Method (Yin, 2009, p. 57)**

The remainder of this chapter provides a description of the methods used to conduct this research. I start by presenting a thorough description of the context of the
study. I then provide a brief overview of my role within the study, background in the field of education, and epistemologies toward education in order to provide a lens for my role and potential biases within present research. I discuss the selection of participants, various phases of the data collection process, and an overview of the data analysis stage. Finally, I provide a description of the generalizability and transferability of the findings within the field of teacher education.

**Context of the Study**

*Importance of Context.* The context of this study played a large role in the analysis of the cases (the participants), as it allowed for me to study my participants in the often complex and dynamic real-world setting of a teacher education program. This included – though was not limited to - both courses the participants were required to take within the social studies education program and the field experiences they were mandated to participate in to receive their teaching licensure. I was, in this sense, unable to separate the phenomena – the extent to which preservice social studies teachers associate discussion as a pedagogical approach with underlying principles of democratic education - from the program and chose not to attempt to do so (Yin, 2014). Basically, I sought to use the teacher education program in which the study took place to gain insight into the emergent thoughts of the participants by considering the mission of the program and how it impacted the thinking of the participants.

By focusing on the context, I was able to identify and value the “noise” that is often dismissed in other research methodologies (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2011). Such noise – or variables and characteristics that comprise the “background” of a study - were
essential to the present research. Hodkinson and Hodkinson elaborate on the idea of “real-world” settings within education by noting how teachers “always work with ‘noise’.
The authors describe how teachers’ contexts and conditions remain in an original, complex, and evolving state. Because of this, I attempted to incorporate as much of the participants’ real world (i.e., course loads, plans for after graduation, previous experiences in education) as possible by taking into account (when necessary) essential components of their experiences in the teacher education program that could not be discounted in the findings (Sheilds, 2007). As an example, I often included broad descriptions of the participants’ cooperating teacher’s pedagogical practices and a brief overview of how these ideas may have impacted the participants’ visions of education or ideas toward teaching the social studies. It should be noted that no data was formally conducted on the cooperating teachers or their students, as they were not formal participants in the study. However, the forms of teaching used and advocated for by the cooperating teachers likely had an impact on the participants of the study and, therefore, I had to take them into account when conducting the study and describing the contexts in which my participants were placed for their field experiences. Moreover, because the research questions sought to explore the participants’ conceptions of discussion and democratic education, I needed to present this information to provide potential evidence that may have led to these ideals.

Context Description. The study occurred within the context of a social studies teacher education program at a large southeastern university. The program is situated within a larger school of education whose mission statement reads:
Our mission is to engage our students in high quality applied research, professional learning, and immersive experiences. We prepare culturally competent scholar practitioners who promote the growth, education, and development of all individuals, with emphasis on underperforming schools and underserved communities across the state and nation. (School of Education, 2013)

Faculty and staff (and other instructors such as graduate teaching assistants and graduate-teachers-of-record) in the program are expected to integrate the various components comprising the program’s mission statement into each course they teach and, subsequently, students in the school of education are expected to develop such characteristics by the time they have graduated from the university. The program uses a conceptual framework with the three learning outcomes: caring; committed to ethical and democratic dispositions, capable; knowledgeable about content and educational foundations and possessing the ability to incorporate these understandings into their practice, and connected; using interdisciplinary approaches and effectively presenting content through a variety of mediums. The current and full iteration of the program’s conceptual framework is presented in the appendix.

The school of education employed an average of 80 faculty members and enrolled an average of 600 graduate students and 600 undergraduate students majoring in education, counseling, and various leadership roles within schools (these numbers are reported from the School of Education). In the 2013-2014 academic year, the school of education had fewer students enrolled, as they had 799 full-time students (both graduate
and undergraduate) and 335 part-time students. Of those, 575 were graduate students and 559 were undergraduate students (totaling 1,134 students).

The school of education in which the study took place was undergoing a transition both in leadership and available degrees. At the beginning of the fall of 2014 semester, the program contained ten teacher education undergraduate programs, two Masters of Arts in Teaching degrees in various content areas designed for those who wish to change careers, and two doctoral programs (Curriculum & Instruction and Educational Leadership). The teacher education program offers undergraduate degrees in early childhood education, elementary education, special education, and secondary education (with emphases in science, mathematics, social studies, and English education). The present study grounds itself within the teacher education program and, more specifically, in the secondary social studies education component of the program. On average, the Secondary (history) Education program educates 20-25 students in each cohort. A traditional student of the secondary program graduates at the conclusion of the spring semester of their senior year and, congruently, at the conclusion of their culminating student teaching experience and capstone course. In 2011 and 2012, 25 students graduated from the social studies education bachelors program with dual degree in history. This number dropped down to 20 graduates in 2013 and 15 in 2014. In the academic year in which the present study took place (2014-2015), only 11 students were expecting to graduate with a degree in social studies education in the spring of 2015. Twelve students were originally accepted into the program; however, one male dropped out to pursue a degree specifically in history. The number, therefore, is less than the
typical years. For the purpose of this study, this low number played no role in the study’s findings aside from limiting the potential pool of participants of which I could recruit participants.

Students of the secondary social studies education program are required to double major in both social studies education and history (regardless of the social studies discipline which they intended on teaching). They also take a wide-range of education-based courses (approximately 6, not including 2 full-methods course and a social studies specific capstone course). This study was purposefully situated at this university because of the unique experiences the participants had during their program (i.e. two methods courses in addition to a wide range of other education-based courses) Though “few studies can be found that provide us with an over-arching view of the current state of social studies teacher education” (Adler, 2008, p. 333), Dumas, Evans, and Weible (1997) claim that “NCATE arrangements generally employ the NCSS Standards, which clearly require a special methods course” (p. 164, emphasis added). Despite clearly not being a definitive claim that most programs require one course, the emphasis on mandating only one course for accreditation does lean toward the idea that having two social studies methods courses makes the program in which this study took place rare.

Prior to being accepted into the secondary social studies program in the spring semester of their second year, preservice teachers in the School of Education must take three education-based courses: Orientation to Education, Educational Psychology, Technology in Education. Once having been accepted into the program, preservice teachers are required to take two social studies methods courses (Junior-level and Senior-
level), History of U.S Public Education, Adolescent Growth and Development,
Introduction to Special Education, Instructional Technology Strategies, Secondary
Content Area Reading, Teaching Internship / Student Teaching, and Secondary Social
Studies Capstone Seminar. A more detailed description of the social studies specific
courses (as seen in the university’s course catalog) can be seen in the appendix.

The teacher education program in which the study occurred is relatively small with
only one faculty member specializing specifically in secondary social studies education
and two others who – though often labeled as social studies education – associate
themselves with educational foundations (with one of the two teaching elementary social
studies education). Therefore, a large portion of the teaching is placed upon graduate
teaching assistants (specifically doctoral students). Because of this, the initial social
studies methods-based course taken in the fall of 2013 by the participants was taught by
the researcher of this study, a third-year doctoral student who was in his third year of the
program. The assistant professor (and instructor of the senior level social studies methods
course) and the researcher met in the summer of 2013 in an attempt to encourage
program cohesiveness within the social studies education program to make for an
effective experience for students within their two social studies methods-based courses.
Such conversations led to a mutual agreement that the two courses should be grounded in
principles of democratic education that emphasized social justice grounded in equality
and equity, citizenship education leading to engaged and informed individuals, and the
development of autonomous and critical thinking students. The assistant professor – a
critical race theorist – and the researcher of this study attempted to develop an experience
for the preservice teachers that would be effective in preparing them to be educators of future citizens.

This study drew its primary data from the senior-level social studies methods course which participants were enrolled in during the fall of 2014 semester. The course, thus, served as the primary sub-context for this study in that the majority of data collected and analyzed for the findings was drawn from participants’ senior-level methods course. The course serves as the final methods course preservice social studies teachers take prior to their student teaching placement and corresponding “capstone” course in the spring semester. It was taught by an assistant professor who was in the middle of his third year at the university and, coinciding with this, third year of teaching the senior-level social studies methods course.

The course is grounded in the aim of providing students with effective methods for teaching the social studies. In this sense, it uses the accompanying field experience (for which preservice teachers are expected to spend 45 hours observing and collaborating with a veteran social studies educator) to prepare students for both student teaching and intertwining sophisticated notions of social studies education with everyday practice in the classroom. In referencing the National Council for the Social Studies, the course syllabus describes the aims of the course:

The goal for this semester is to create a classroom [emphasizing the NCSS standards] by developing instructional practices and materials appropriate for secondary social studies; assessment, familiarization with curriculum materials, embracing new ways of knowing and understanding the teaching of the social
Senior-Level Social Studies Methods is largely grounded in principles of democratic education. The assistant professor – a former secondary social studies teacher and [at the time of the study] a critical race theorist and social studies teacher educator within academia– spent much of the course helping students make connections between the best practices of social studies and critical themes in education. In this sense, his objective was to eradicate the false – but, nevertheless, often referenced- dichotomy between theory and practice within the classroom. Because of this, many of the course readings (as seen on the syllabus in the appendix) provided to students were scholarly articles from the leading theorists within the field of social studies education. Students were expected to read the articles and connect such principles to both their time in Senior-Level Social Studies Methods Course and their field experiences. The course also reflected the broad aims of the program as stated in the aforementioned mission statement in that it, like the program itself, sought to prepare preservice teachers to create effective citizens in the classroom. Such themes, though not new to the students of the course (as they had previously experienced such ideas a Principles of American Education course and an Orientation to Education course) were discussed in more detail in Junior and Senior-Level Social Studies Methods course and tied specifically to the teaching of social studies.
It should be noted, however, that another portion of data collected and used consisted of data from participants’ junior level social studies methods course taken in the fall of 2013. At the time of this pilot study, the researcher did not know the data would be included within the current study and, therefore, participants were asked at the beginning of the fall 2014 semester if the data collected for the pilot study could be included in the dissertation. All six participants agreed and, therefore, the data from the pilot study was included in the present study and, thus, served as part of the context of the study.

**Role of Researcher**

As the sole researcher for this dissertation, a portion of my responsibilities were to collect and analyze data from participants’ Senior-Level Social Studies Methods course as well as an array of researcher-developed sources. These data were collected throughout the fall of 2014 and merged with data collected from the participants in their junior level social studies methods course in the fall of 2013. Thorough descriptions of the data will be discussed throughout the data collection and analysis portions of this chapter. Because of my role and responsibilities throughout this study, it is first necessary to describe the prior relationships I had with the participants, my own positions within the social studies program, and my broad ideologies within the field of education.

**Relationships with participants.**

Each of the participants had taken at least one course with me as the instructor of record (junior-level social studies methods) in the fall of 2013. The course was a junior-level social studies methods course that met once a week for an hour and 15 minutes and
included a three hour field placement for students enrolled in the course. The course’s primary purpose was to introduce students to broad theories within social studies education and present them with foundational methods for achieving such aims within the classroom. I developed course materials (e.g., readings, assessments, lessons), overall themes for the course itself (e.g., democratic education, multicultural education, reflective practice), and all the integration of the field placement (three hours per week) into the course. Despite the course being developed from several syllabi of similar courses and based on the “traditional” themes of a social studies education methods course, the structure of the class was still likely influenced by my own research interests and understandings of the field of social studies education. In this sense, participants in the present study were exposed to my personal experiences, theories and ideas of social studies education since their enrollment in the junior level social studies methods course.

**Position within the social studies program.**

In the fall of 2014, I was beginning my fourth year as a full-time doctoral student at the university in which the study was conducted. In the three prior years I had taught two additional courses in addition to Orientation to Education and Principles of American Education, Because of this, multiple participants had me as an instructor for more than the junior level social studies methods course and, therefore, were likely to have developed a relationship with me beyond researcher-participant. This familiarity provided participants with an extra level of comfort with me, which potentially led to more honest responses throughout the data collection process.
I had also developed a collegial relationship with the instructor of the Senior-Level Social Studies Methods course in which participants were enrolled in the fall of 2014. The assistant professor of the course served as a member of my dissertation committee and was the instructor for multiple courses I had taken during my doctoral program (e.g., Critical Issues in the Social Studies, Teacher Education and the Social Studies, and an independent study conducted in the summer of 2013). He served as a personal mentor to my progress in the doctoral program, a guide for the development of this research, and an outlet for me to collect data within Senior-Level Social Studies Methods.

**My ideologies within the field of education.**

As an emerging scholar throughout this dissertation, I was still in the process of developing my core beliefs toward the field of education. Those that have been firmly established, however, played a role in my analysis of the data (to be presented in the findings of this study). My own ideologies likely impacted the way in which I taught the junior-level social studies methods course (including the readings provided, topics selected, and strategies used to teach the content) as well as the perspectives I had toward the participants’ teaching throughout their field experiences. Therefore, I needed to take into consideration my own subjectivities and ideologies by bracketing these beliefs (Merriam, 1998). In short, I attempted to “bracket or suspend [my] own belief in reality to study the reality of everyday life” throughout the course of the present study (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 11). Bracketing my own subjectivities allowed for me to most honestly and objectively consider the lived-experiences and realities of my participants and best
examine and explain their views and conceptions toward discussion as a pedagogical approach in an objective manner (Merriam, 1998).

At the time of the study, I had attended two separate universities in the southeastern United States that advocated for broad themes of democratic education. Both my bachelors and masters degree were attained from the same institution which – like the location of the present study – prides itself on both research within the field of democratic education and preparing preservice teachers for roles as effective educators. It was at this institution where I developed an interest in collaborative learning on controversial issues through various pedagogical approaches, including discussion through the program’s emphasis on the works of Dewey, Parker, and Hess.

Once having completed my master’s degree, I then taught middle school social studies at a medium-sized (approximately 400 students) in the southeast. The school was a Title I school, which received federal funding due a large portion of the student body receiving free and reduced lunch. The school itself had frequently failed to meet No Child Left Behind’s “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP) standards and, therefore, placed a strong emphasis on teaching students concrete knowledge grounded in standard-based material and traditional forms of pedagogy. This form of pedagogy served to influence my complex and evolving beliefs about accountability and standard-based approaches to teaching and learning. At the time of this study, I situated myself in the belief that teaching directly to the standards limits both the potential of schools to encourage learning and the teaching of democratic-based aims of education.
In regards to using discussion as an instructional strategy, I have consistently maintained the role of discussion in the classroom as essential for both student growth and the generation of a democratic environment. My beliefs toward discussion, therefore, reflect the theories underlying chapter two of this dissertation. The definition presented in chapter two of discussion being “an action among multiple parties that seeks to construct new knowledge through a collaborative, inquiry-based effort in which ideas are exchanged and views evolve” has served as my own personal vision and definition of discussion. I associate discussion with knowledge construction and students being exposed to relevant issues and events they will need to become informed and engaged citizens. I also consider the use of discussion in the classroom to not only be its own instructional strategy, but also a strategy to go along with other “best practices” in the social studies to improve their effectiveness. Therefore, I have consistently sought to integrate the use of collaboration through discussion at both the secondary school level and the university level through various activities where students work together to construct knowledge and develop a stronger understanding both of one another and the content underpinning the lesson.

My views toward democratic education and the social studies had been inextricably linked since entering into the field of education as an undergraduate student. My philosophies of education, thus, revolved around themes of equality and equity within the classroom, social justice as an aim of the school system, the development of participatory and engaged citizens, and critical and higher-order thinking as a means for student engagement. More specifically, I viewed the classroom as a place where students
could become autonomous thinkers capable of making rational evidence-based decisions from an array of sources (through conversation or primary and secondary sources). My beliefs about education are grounded in the notion of preparing students for their role as citizens in a pluralist society contingent on an educated populace. Such objectives guided my beliefs when discovering my line of research (and academic interests), designing the present study, and analyzing the collected data.

**Participant Selection**

I chose to do a multiple-case study because multiple participants would provide me the best opportunity to effectively answer my research questions. Additionally, the variety of participants allowed for me to collect a wide range of data from a diverse group of individuals (Herriott & Firestone, 1983; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Stake, 1995). Merriam (1998) explicates validity and reliability through multiple cases by stating “The inclusion of multiple cases is, in fact, a common strategy for enhancing the external validity or generalizability of…findings” (p. 40). Similarly, Miles and Huberman (1984) claim researchers can improve both the reliability and validity of a case study “by looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases [by which] we can understand a single-case finding, grounding it by specifying how and where and, if possible, why it carries on as it does” (p. 29; emphasis in original). The multi-case study approach allowed for a threshold of transferability (Guba, 1981) to be reached, allowing for readers to have a stronger ability to apply the findings to contexts outside of the present study. As such, the validity and reliability that multiple cases allows for more provides trustworthy and applicable findings.
Through a combination of purposeful sampling and convenience sampling (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2009), I selected six participants. Purposeful sampling was used to select participants who had been accepted into the secondary social studies education program, had successfully completed the junior level social studies methods in the fall of 2013, were scheduled to take the senior-level of the course in the fall of 2014, and represented preservice teachers from multiple social studies disciplines (economics, history, political science, geography) and secondary foci (middle school or high school level). Convenience sampling was used due to the program of study at which the participants were enrolled. The participants were enrolled in a social studies education program within a school of education that I had worked within for three years and, therefore, was familiar with the mission and policies of the program. I had previously served as the instructor-of-record for many courses taken by the participants; one of which they had agreed to participate in a pilot study. The participants and I had already established a positive relationship, which allowed for a more convenient experience throughout data collection.

Upon recruiting and selecting potential participants, I examined demographic information and previous interviews with all of the preservice teachers from the social studies program to find the most diverse group of students. In the 10-person cohort, there existed a range of male and female participants from varying backgrounds and having differing interests in and conceptions of social studies education. I used this range to recruit and select a variety of participants to add to both the reliability and validity of the study and, therefore, increase the applicability of the findings to other teacher education
programs. Additionally, I sought to find participants aiming to teach varying disciplines in the social studies (i.e., political science, geography, economics, history). This form of careful participant selection allowed for my sample to provide a detailed picture of how multiple preservice social studies teachers at a large southeastern university conceptualize discussion and view it as a pedagogical approach in relation to the primary components of democratic education (Yin, 2009). For this study, I selected 6 participants: one male preservice teacher with a focus on high school history and five female preservice teachers (two with a middle school history focus, two with a high school history focus, and one with a political science focus). Following, you will find a table (Table 1) detailing participants’ demographics and a brief description of their field of study.

Description of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age (fall of 2014)</th>
<th>Gender &amp; Race</th>
<th>Born &amp; Raised</th>
<th>Intended Grade Level</th>
<th>Intended Discipline</th>
<th>Plan for After Graduation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Female, White</td>
<td>West and Southeast</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Nanny in Europe before returning to U.S. &amp; teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Female, White</td>
<td>Midwest &amp; Northeast</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Teach for America for two years before returning to law school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Male, White</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Graduate school for history then teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erin</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Female, White</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Still undecided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fran</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Female, White</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Teaching secondary history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathleen</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Female, White</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Teaching secondary history</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Summary of Participants
**Sydney.** At the time of the present study (beginning in the fall of 2014), Sydney was 21 years old. A white female born on the west coast, Sydney moved to the southeast in elementary school. Prior to taking her junior level methods course, Sydney had taken another course – Orientation to Education – in the fall of 2011 where I served as the instructor. When asked about her decision to be a teacher, Sydney enthusiastically responded that she had wanted to be a teacher since she was 12. Part of the reason for this, she noted, was that she always loved reading and found herself to be a self-learner on account of the curiosity that her passion for reading presented to her. Sydney also noted that she was raised within an “engineering family” where education was heavily valued and she considered herself a self-learner because of this emphasis.

Upon entering into her undergraduate studies, Sydney was an elementary education major for about two weeks until feeling as though she needed to be challenged in terms of historical content. More specifically, Sydney claimed that her testing out of college level history courses disappointed her because she felt she had reached an unnecessary pique in her education on history. Recognizing this, Sydney saw secondary social studies education as a way for her to continue learning history while, simultaneously, bringing her interest in working with adolescents into a fulfilling career. After graduation, Sydney expected to take a year off and go to Italy and then teach somewhere in the United States. Though she was still unclear about the students she wished to teach, Sydney was leaning toward middle school social studies, something she noted as being surprising, but appealing.
Adriana. Beginning in the fall of 2014, Adriana was 21-years-old. A white female, Adriana was born in the Midwest where she moved twice prior to relocating a third time to the Northeast at 10 years old. She remained in Pennsylvania until the age of 18 when she began her undergraduate degree (which involved her taking an additional course where I was the instructor, Orientation to Education, in the spring of 2012). Adriana described her experiences in the K12 schools positively and noted that her parents moved to neighborhoods specifically because of the schools. That was a key priority for them and, in this sense, “they really valued education”. Because of this, Adriana ended up taking lots of upper level classes, which seemingly prepared her for college.

What made Adriana an interesting case for this study was her interest in the field of education. Unlike the other participants who mostly sought to become educators after completing their undergraduate or graduate programs, Adrian ultimately wanted to become an attorney who specialized in education reform. Though her “10 year plan” was still developing, Adriana noted at the beginning of the fall of 2014 that she planned to go into Teach For America after graduating for about two years and then leverage herself into Law School so she can work on educational policy. When asked about what subject within the social studies she wanted to teach through Teach For America, she mentioned political science in a low socioeconomic area, but again emphasized how the teaching aspect was a stepping stone to reforming the field from a bureaucratic position.

Michael. Michael, a 21 year old at the time of the study, grew up in a small suburban town in the southeast where he became interested in history and the teaching of
social studies in the ninth grade. His interest in the social studies stemmed from a particular history teacher who was seen as effective due to his use of primary sources and historical inquiry. From Michael’s descriptions of this experience, history “came alive” to him as he was taught in a manner where historical interpretation and investigation were crucial components to his experience in the ninth grade.

Originally, Michael felt as though he was more interested in the content portion of the social studies (in this case, history) than he was the actual pedagogical practice of teaching the social studies. Michael considered getting an undergraduate degree in history. However, as he progressed in his college experience, Michael noted that he had developed a stronger interest in the teaching of social studies, despite “really not seeing that one coming!” Though his plans at the time of the study were not definitive, Michael claimed he wanted to attend graduate school to pursue a graduate degree in education prior to entering into the classroom as an in-service social studies teacher.

**Erin.** Erin was a 21-year-old at the time of the study who noted that she always wanted to be a teacher. Her interest caused her to enroll in a teacher cadet program in high school, where she was placed in what she described as an enjoyable middle school classroom for her teacher cadet field experience. As a freshman in college, Erin had taken an Orientation to Education course with the researcher and demonstrated a passion for the field of education that was reflected in assignments submitted and comments made within the course.

Much like Michael, Erin – at the beginning of her fourth year – was still unclear about her plans for after graduation. When asked about her plans in the fall of 2014, she
noted that she was “not sure if she wanted to teach” after graduation. However, Erin did say she expected to do so and that she likely would want to teach middle school social studies due to her positive experiences in such an environment throughout her teacher education program and high school teacher cadet program.

**Fran.** At the beginning of her fourth year in college, Fran was a 21-year-old female who was planning on graduating at the end of the spring semester and find a job teaching somewhere in the southeast. Prior to participating in the study, the researcher had previously had Fran of a student for two courses: Orientation to Education (fall 2011) and junior level social studies methods (fall 2013). During both courses, Fran frequently alluded to the fact that her father was a history teacher and her mother was a history major. Fran claimed that because of this, her upbringing made it so that social studies played a pivotal role in what she thought about school and how she developed as a teacher. Ultimately, she decided to become a teacher both because of her parents and, to use her own words:

> A lot of social studies that maybe didn’t teach social studies in a very engaging way [sic] and I watched as a lot of my friends became disengaged in the social studies, and I even struggled staying engaged in some class, which actually motivated me. (Initial Interview, August 20, 2014)

Fran consistently demonstrated a high level of passion about social studies teaching. Her goal was – and seems to have always been - to be a teacher and her intention after graduating from her undergraduate program was to enter directly into the classroom as an in-service teacher.
Kathleen. Kathleen, at the beginning of her final year in college, was a 21-year-old white female. In the fall of 2011 she took the same Orientation to Education course as Sydney, in which I was the instructor of record. Therefore, I had known Kathleen for three years prior to the study beginning. Originally from the northeast, Kathleen had noted her interest in working with younger children since she was younger. Kathleen originally wanted to become a kindergarten teacher, but then switched to second grade and later middle school (which took her into the secondary education program). What made Kathleen an interesting candidate was a comment she had made in the fall of 2013 during her initial interview for the pilot study of the present research. When asked why she wanted to become a social studies teacher, specifically, Kathleen said:

I picked social studies because I knew I wanted to teach but I don’t like English or science, so it left me with math or social studies… um, and I wanted to do math, but then I realized when I came to Clemson I would have to major in math and that wasn’t going to happen so I had social studies. Which it wasn’t my last choice, it was my second choice…” (Initial Interview, September 25, 2013)

This quote made Kathleen an interesting participant due to her lack of initial interest in teaching the social studies. While the other five candidates were confident in their selection of social studies as a subject-area, Kathleen was more indifferent to the idea and made it seem as though she selected it for reasons other than a passion for the content. Though in no way a fault or something to look down upon, Kathleen’s honesty about her feelings toward the social studies were expected to add an element of uniqueness to the present research. While the other participants had a strong interest and passion in the
social studies, Kathleen *originally* was more excited about teaching, generally speaking than she was the teaching social studies.

Though her plans were not yet definitive at the beginning of her final year in the social studies education program, Kathleen made note of her interest in attending graduate school with a focus in education prior to entering into the classroom as a fulltime educator.

**Data Collection**

As seen in Yin’s (2009) case study method (as seen in Figure 1) once a research question has been constructed, a study designed, and participants selected, a researcher must progress to the data collection stage in which they design data collection protocol and, subsequently, collect data. After formulating my research questions and selecting a multi-case study design, I considered the types of data to collect and the most appropriate and effective means for doing so. The aim was to select a range of data to best describe the associations preservice teachers make between democratic education and the use of discussion in the classroom. The data also needed to assist me in understanding how my participants conceptualized both democratic education and discussion and the extent to which the teacher education program in which the participants were enrolled advocated for the principles of democratic education described in chapter two.

One component of my data collection that was essential to meeting this aim was the collection of a wide range of rich data on each participant (Yin, 2003). Researchers frequently note how case study allows researchers to collect an array of data including interviews, observations, artifacts, and other forms of data that can be specific to a
researcher’s questions (e.g., Baxter & Jacks, 2008; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Meyer (2001) notes the appealing nature of allowing researchers to select their forms of data by claiming a researcher can tailor “the design and data collection procedures to the research questions” (p. 330). Therefore, data collection becomes specific to research questions and can be rigorously collected through a method formalized by the researcher (i.e. a researcher’s data collection protocol).

The use of a thoroughly developed plan for collecting data strengthens the case study approach in that it allows for thorough and consistent data collection and analysis. Hamilton (2011) notes that case studies encourage the collection of “‘rich data’, as it can give the researcher in-depth insights into participants’ lived experiences with this particular context” (p. 1). In other words, through case study research I was best able to describe the “lived-reality” of participants specific to their lives as preservice teachers, which, as detailed by Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2001), includes “the experiences of individuals, small groups, or organizations” (Lived Reality section, para. 1) within my research context. The rich, robust, and empirical data collected, analyzed, and presented through a well-developed holistic case study allowed for me to gain a strong understanding of the complex nature of the participants in my study and their understandings of several sophisticated notions in teacher education (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

Data collection spanned one semester when not taking into consideration the data collected in the junior-level social studies methods throughout the fall of 2013 in a pilot study. The data collection phase, for this reason, was designed in a manner allowing for it
to be crosschecked, triangulated, and analyzed for themes amongst both individual participants and throughout the multiple cases to make the findings transferable (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). The data, in other words, could be used to describe how a typical representative preservice teacher conceptualizes discussion as a pedagogical approach in the secondary classroom (Patton, 2002).

After careful consideration, I decided upon designing my study through multiple “phases” in which data collection would take place over the course of the entire semester. I designed these phases to not be mutually exclusive and, instead, allow for me to triangulate and converge data both during and after the semester. In this sense, I would continuously collect data throughout the semester and use open coding (Walker & Myrick, 2006) to identify themes and validate findings (which will be further explicated in the data analysis portion of this chapter). Data collection took place over these phases occurring throughout the participants’ tenure in the social studies teacher education program (See Table 2 and Table 3) The following section describes nine phases including previous data collected in the fall of 2013 (i.e. Pilot Study Data), and data that was continuously collected throughout the fall of 2014 (i.e. Additional Continuous Data). Following these descriptions, I provide detailed descriptions of each form of data collected throughout each phase and the processes used to analyze the data.
**Phase** | **Data Collection Overview**
--- | ---
**Pilot Study Data** | Junior Level Social Studies Methods: Data from fall of 2013 (interviews, lesson plans, written reflections on teaching, teaching philosophies, in-class comments), Syllabi, School of Education conceptual framework
**Additional Continuous Data** | Senior-Level Social Studies Methods: Quizzes, Rationales, Responses to Reading Prompts, Unit Plan, Lesson Plans, Course Syllabi, Unannounced assessments (in-class group work, in-class comments).
I | Interviews on A) Biographical information B) Philosophies of education
II | Initial Prompt Responses: Written open-ended questionnaire regarding discussion and aims of ed.
III | Best practices video shown & written questionnaire provided. Data collected included in-class comments and written reflections.
IV | Interview on best practices protocol. (e.g., “you wrote this about the video, can you tell me more about this?)
V | Observation #1, lesson plan and materials, and subsequent interview
VI | Observation #2, lesson plan and materials, and subsequent Interview
VII | Observation #3 lesson plan and materials, and subsequent Interview
VIII | Best practices video shown again & written questionnaire provided
IX | Conclusion Interview

**Table 2: Overview of Data Collection Phases**

A table depicting the data collected and the contexts can be seen in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>JUNIOR LEVEL SOCIAL STUDIES METHODS</strong></th>
<th><strong>SENIOR LEVEL SOCIAL STUDIES METHODS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(PILOT STUDY DATA)</td>
<td>(PILOT STUDY DATA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COURSE READINGS</td>
<td>COURSE READINGS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COURSE SYLLABI</td>
<td>COURSE SYLLABI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEACHING RATIONALES</td>
<td>TEACHING RATIONALES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRITTEN REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING</td>
<td>WRITTEN REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWO QUIZZES</td>
<td>TWO QUIZZES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWO DEVELOPED LESSON PLANS</td>
<td>TWO DEVELOPED LESSON PLANS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONE INTERVIEW</td>
<td>ONE INTERVIEW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FALL 2013</td>
<td>FALL 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3: Linear Depiction of Data Collection Phases**
Pilot Study Data: Junior-level social studies methods. As noted when describing the context of the study, a portion of the data used for the present study consisted of data from a pilot study conducted in the fall of 2013 (which the researcher did not know would later be used as part of the dissertation). Therefore, the first stage of data collection was the identification and selection of participants’ data that was collected during this pilot study. This data was used as a way to collect biographical data and broad overviews of participants’ aims and understandings of the field of education. This initial study sought to explore the experiences preservice social studies teachers had with discussion in their university-level courses. In doing so, a variety of data were collected from each of the participants (i.e. Pilot Study Data noted in Table 2 and 3). As research questions developed for the current study, it became apparent that the use of these pieces of data would benefit my findings by providing background on the participants’ thought about social studies education and additional data sources to create a more thorough narrative of each participants’ experience in the senior level social studies methods course. In the summer of 2014, I requested and obtained university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to use this data for the current study and obtained the right to do so. All participants in the study consented to allowing me to use data from the previous study at the beginning of this study to gain demographic information and background information regarding their social studies teaching experiences and beliefs prior to the senior level social studies methods course.

Data collected in this phase consisted of participants’ teaching rationales, descriptions of three teaching experiences, two developed (but not implemented) lesson
plans, and one interview per participant regarding their biographical information and their broad views toward the teaching of the social studies (see Appendix for the interview protocol). This data also consisted of the course syllabus for the junior level social studies methods course, as developed by the instructor of the course and the researcher of this study. Within the syllabus, data included the aims of the course and the readings mandated of the participants (primarily Parker’s edited anthology *Social Studies Today: Research and Practice*). Finally, data from this pilot study included descriptions of participants’ three required teaching experiences in which they were asked to briefly teach a lesson (typically an ice-breaker or brief segment of a lecture) during their field placements. Participants generated separate written reflections for each of these teaching experiences and submitted them as part of their coursework.

**Additional Continuous Data: Senior-Level Social Studies Methods.**

Throughout the fall of 2014, a continuous line of data was collected which was either submitted by participants throughout their Senior-Level Social Studies Methods course or collected as part of the program (e.g., syllabi, conceptual frameworks, course readings). In other words, the assignments in which the participants were expected to submit throughout their Senior-Level Social Studies Methods course became an expanding set of data. This data set consisted of a formalized teaching philosophy developed by each participant (i.e., “Rationale for Teaching”), written responses to prompts regarding assigned readings, a completed unit plan, multiple lesson plans which they had the option to use in their field experiences, and other assessments developed throughout the course (e.g., in-class group work, comments made for participation points). Additionally, this
phase included the collection of the course syllabus developed by the assistant professor (i.e. instructor of record for this course), which identified all assigned readings and the objectives of the course itself. Finally, informal conversations with the participants were included in the data collection when appropriate. These forms of data consisted of informal comments that were not originally described as “on-record” (though adhered to the original IRB), email correspondences, and other forms of communications.

Throughout the semester, participants continually submitted data from their senior level social studies methods course. As they completed assignments for class, they submitted them to the assistant professor as a class requirement and to me as part of my research. After collecting each piece of data, I blinded it and placed it into “individual folders” on a password protected cloud-sharing site (DropBox) allowing for both security and the development of individual, evolving case reports.

**Phase One: Initial Interviews.** In the first formal phase of data collection, I interviewed each of the participants individually to collect biographical information and better understand their ideas toward democratic education. This interview, it should be noted, was initially done without taking into account the previous responses from participants that were given in their interview conducted in the pilot study. Rather, the biographical information and basic questions regarding the field of education were asked again both to corroborate previously obtained information and expand upon new ideas specific to the current research study. It was only after these interviews were asked in the fall of 2014 that the responses were compared to those from the previous interview.
An additional aim of these initial interviews in the fall of 2014 was to explore the extent to which participants associated democratic education with the social studies. The emphasis at this point was not on the use of discussion in social studies, though methods of the use of discussion in this interview were cautiously “chased” in interviews by encouraging participants to explain their understandings of discussion when and if the topic arose. Such caution was taken in an attempt to not “lead” participants by solely and explicitly focusing on the topics of discussion and democratic education. Therefore, the aim throughout phase one of data collection was to develop an understanding of how preservice social studies teachers viewed the field of social studies in the classroom and the broad associations they made between teaching the social studies and democratic aims of education.

The interviews took place at the beginning of the semester and were conducted in a semi-structured format, in that several questions were presented to participants, but the researcher often deviated slightly from the formal questions (i.e. order of questions or the specific questions asked) by inserting additional prompting questions if a participant responded in a manner in which the researcher deemed worthy of clarification (Turner, 2010). For instance, if a participant mentioned the use of discussion as a teaching practice, I cautiously probed into their remarks in an attempt to better understand the connections they were making and their thoughts toward these pedagogical approaches. This allowed for me to be more flexible in my line of questioning and look into ideas that I found to be intriguing (Merriam, 2009). The questions asked throughout this initial interview often reflected those asked during the first interview conducted in the fall of
2013 during the pilot study. However, this interview also included new questions more relevant to the present study. These questions can be seen as Interview Protocol #2 within the Appendix.

**Phase Two: Initial Prompts Responses.** In an attempt to create content-validity (Merriam, 1998) and find both contrasting and similar themes, participants responded to several open-ended written questions reflecting those asked during the interview. This was done in an attempt to both confirm the comments made by the participants in their interviews and allow for extended time to reflect upon their ideas and develop more thorough and extended responses. Because the participants were grappling with sophisticated notions regarding the field of education, it became crucial to confirm the beliefs of participants throughout the course of data collection. Another aim to these reflective writings was to encourage participants to provide a concrete definition of discussion within the classroom and to describe their beliefs about discussion as a form of pedagogy. For one prompt, the participants were asked to define discussion in any way they deemed appropriate. This prompt, however, was just one of many questions regarding other common forms of social studies practice described within teacher education. The purpose of this prompt was not to associate discussion with democratic education, but to provide a description of what they believe discussion within the social studies classroom involves (e.g., participants, duration, topics). Participants submitted responses to these questions through a variety of mediums including – but not limited to – via email, in person, and on a cloud-sharing service (DropBox). Questions used for Prompt Responses can be found in Protocol #3 within the appendix.
Phase Three: Initial Responses to Best Practices Video. The third phase of the present research study involved having participants view a video of a classroom teacher and provide written responses to several prompt questions during one of the senior social studies methods courses (to be described more thoroughly in the “data sources” portion of this chapter). The rationale for showing the video to the entire Senior-Level Social Studies Methods class was to create an environment where the participants of the study were collectively exploring the video, but in a manner where they were not learning who else was in the study. The ideal was for participants to respond to the video as honestly and openly as possible and to so in where all of the students in the course – including the participants – did not know this was part of the dissertation research. It should be noted that this component of data collection – though occurring within a class session – was not part of the actual course. The assistant professor of the course allowed me to use approximately 35 minutes of class to show the video and attempt to facilitate a discussion on it.

The video itself was meant to provide preservice teachers with an example of an exemplar teacher who appeared to both understand how the ideals of democratic education as put forth by prominent scholars and worked to incorporate such an experience into the classroom. However, the reasoning for how and why the video was selected was not discussed with the class. The video was also shown in an attempt to have participants reflect upon the various forms of pedagogy occurring in the video. Participants were asked to assess the educator, identify the forms of instruction being used, and make relevant associations between coursework and the practices seen in the
video. Because a sub-question of this study focused on preservice social studies teachers’ abilities to identify discussion as an effective form of pedagogy in the social studies, this video-based reflection was used to attempt to understand whether participants could identify and acknowledged its use in the classroom.

In an attempt to maintain the validity of the study and, more specifically, the participants’ lack of knowledge regarding the specific focus of the research questions, the video was initially introduced to the entire class as a way to ultimately get them “speaking to one another about a practicing teacher” after having reflected on the clip individually. This was a way to get all members of the course (4 of which were not in the study) to interact in a collaborative environment where the participants did not know they were completing a critical component to the data collection process.

Once the video had been shown in the class and the participants had time to respond to the protocol questions and submit them, I facilitated a brief discussion with all of the students in the classroom. As the researcher, I took field notes while watching the discussion occur (which was also being videotaped to later be transcribed), specifically focusing on the comments of this study’s participants. Any comments, or contributions to the discussion were noted. I also identify if, and to what extent, the comments made were associated with democratic education or the use of discussion.

**Phase Four: Interview on Video Responses.** After the entire senior social studies methods course engaged in the viewing, reflection, and discourse on the best practices video, only this study’s participants’ reflective writings on the “best practices video” were collected. Each participant’s reflective writings were reviewed and used to
develop interview prompts related to their specific reflective writing. I read through each of the responses and individually interviewed participants about claims they made about the social studies teaching practices in the video, which were later transcribed. The purpose of this phase was similar to that of phase three in that it was meant to better understand the associations the participants made between various forms of pedagogy and broad aims of a democratic education. Questions used to interview the participants were a variation of the same prompts used to encourage reflections on the video during class (e.g., a rewording of Protocol #4 used to develop their reflective writing). For instance, if a participant mentioned the use of discussion, I asked them to elaborate on why they chose to mention this form of pedagogy after viewing the video. The aim was to explore the broad ideas underlying their thoughts regarding the pedagogy seen in the video. If a student mentioned that the students appeared “engaged” in the video, I would ask them how they knew this or why this was important in an attempt to see how they used the evidence of student engagement in identifying teacher effectiveness and/or best practices. Scholars and policymakers alike would agree that active student engagement is essential to a powerful classroom experience for students, but if the content is not linked to any specific forms of democratic, citizenship, or multicultural education (to name a few examples), then the engagement will likely only be surface-deep (McTighe, Sief, Wiggins, 2004). The objective while interviewing participants who noted student engagement, therefore, was to see if they made connections beyond the notion of engaging students to the aims of education or, more specifically, the social studies. This is important to the field of education because many preservice social studies teachers
identify with best practices of “general teachers” instead of “social studies teachers” (Dinkelman, 1999).

Phase Five, Phase Six, And Phase Seven: Observations and Interviews. The fifth, sixth, and seventh phases of the present study have been combined in this section. Each phase consisted of two key components: an observation of participants teaching within their field placement and a subsequent interview on the teaching practices used throughout that specific class session. Additionally, phases five, six, and seven included any materials or lesson plans used and provided to the researcher throughout data collection. The purpose of taking the present research study outside of the context of the senior-level methods course was to attempt to see the extent to which the participants integrated the theories of democratic education (including the use of discussion) into their corresponding field placement experience. Observations and the subsequent interviews assisted in discovering the degree to which participants’ claims throughout interviews and written reflections mirrored their practices.

The following section breaks the observations and the subsequent interviews into two parts to allow for clear descriptions of what each element consisted of and how it benefited the researchers’ attempt to answering the questions underlying the present study. However, the two were not mutually exclusive and, in this sense, informed one another as the observations and interviews of each participant continued throughout the study. With the goal of this study being to observing each of the six participants for each of their three lessons (total of 18 observations), my aim was to complete three subsequent interviews with each participant as well (total of 18 subsequent interviews). Due to time
and scheduling constraints, I was only able to conduct three separate observations and subsequent interviews for three of the participants (total of 9 observations and 9 subsequent interviews). The other three participants each had two observations and two subsequent interviews (total of 6 observations and 6 subsequent interviews). In total, I completed 15 field observations and subsequent interviews.

**Field Experience Observation.** During their senior-level methods course, participants were required to teach at least three lessons for their corresponding field placement at different public schools. A large portion of data collected from participants during their field placement experience was based on observations of their lessons. As noted above, 15 observations were collected from the participants (three different observations from three participants and two separate observations from two participants) throughout their field placement. No restrictions were placed on what, how or when they taught, as I chose to allow them the autonomy to make the observations as “natural” as possible and fit within the schedule of their placement. Participants did not seem to tailor lessons or actions based on what they may have felt I considered “good” pedagogy or prior interviews with me. Though no formal evidence of this was collected, several conversations with participants made it seem as if they planned their lessons as if I were not observing them.

Throughout the observations, I took in-depth field observation notes (bracketing my own analyses and assumptions toward the participants’ teaching and the response of their students) while simultaneously audio-recording the lessons on my computer. My field notes regularly consisted of the detailed descriptions on the lessons taught, the forms
of pedagogy used, the content discussed, and the extent to which the class participated in the lesson (which was informally observed). This allowed for me to take an objective viewpoint when conducting the field observations. Any “critical” moments were written about in detail as they were occurring and then later matched with the recording.

To build the most “natural” experience for each participant, I continuously reminded them that my sole purpose for observing them was for my dissertation research and that none of the data collected had any association with their standing within the teacher education program. Therefore, I did not support participants in developing or implementing their lessons, provide them with feedback or coaching on their teaching experiences, or evaluate them in any official manner for their field placement. I informed participants of this and encouraged them not to feel pressured to teach through any type of pedagogy or cover specific content. Rather, I made clear that the intention was to see them teaching as they would without my presence in the classroom.

It should be noted, however, that on one occasion I volunteered to help a participant during a lesson. Though this will be described in more detail during the participant’s individual case report in chapter four, I provided Erin with several discussion questions to ask her students during an observation. This was done due to the fact that she was filling in for her cooperating teacher that day (who was absent) and had forty minutes left in class when she ran out of activities to do. This was the only instance in which I played a role in the generation of the participants’ data.

Subsequent Field Experience Observation Interview. Directly after each observation, I interviewed the participants individually to gain insight into their views of
their teaching experience. A total of 15 subsequent interviews were collected (three different interviews from three participants and two different interviews from two participants). Because each lesson was completed without guidelines, I was unable to develop a formal protocol for the post-observation interviews. Rather, I used semi-structured (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008) interview questions for the first portion of the interviews and then transitioned into the use of the field notes I had taken throughout observations to find critical points to ask participants about (See Interview Protocol #5). If a participant noted that they attempted to incorporate discussion into their lesson, I asked them questions regarding their justification for doing so and views on how well they thought the discussion went amongst the students. I attempted to review segments of the lessons to see if they would mention the use of discussion on their own accord. In other words, if a student inquired about a current issue or event and the participant only spent a few seconds responding to the question, I sought to understand why they chose to use this approach, what they believed about their interactions with the students, and if they noted it as being an effective strategy. Similarly, I was curious to have participants describe what they may do differently if they were to teach this lesson again (in this sense, to have them reflect upon their teaching experiences).

**Phase Eight: Reviewing of Best Practices Video.** As the semester progressed and participants became more familiar with key theories and practices assumed to be appropriate for the social studies (as detailed in the Senior-Level Social Studies Methods syllabus), I sought to explore the extent to which participants developed in their ability to make connections between theories of democratic education and the use of discussion in
teaching. Therefore, the “best practices” video shown at the beginning of the semester to
the senior social studies methods course was shown again to participants to see if and
how their views changed and whether they became able to identify the practice of
discussion. By asking them to view video again, I provided participants the opportunity
to take what they had learned and experienced throughout the semester and apply it to the
previously viewed clip. The second viewing of the video was purposefully during the last
week of the semester and directly prior to each participant’s conclusion interview. The
rationale for doing this was two-fold. Firstly, this provided an opportunity for each
participant to express his or her views toward this critical component of the research
independently, openly, and honestly. I did not want the participants to expand on the
ideas of others or stay completely silent in a collective dialogue. Rather, I wanted to
encourage them to speak their own views on the best practices video by conducting this
second viewing within an office where I would be the only other person in the room.

The second reason the video was viewed independently toward the end of the
semester was on account of logistical issues (e.g. time management). While viewing the
video in class the first time, the issue of time impacted my facilitation of the video
reflection. I was allotted thirty minutes to show the video, have participants fill out the
written protocol, and conduct a discussion regarding the video itself. Though I did
manage to successfully show the first seven minutes of the video, have students fill out
the four-question protocol, and encourage a 15-minute discussion, I still felt pressed for
time and that I was unable to delve into issues that may have been useful to answering the
study’s research questions. Though the assistant professor certainly would have allowed
for more time during the second showing, I feared taking up too much course time toward the end of the semester. Therefore, I opted to show the video in a setting where time would neither be a factor within the course nor as a limitation to how much data would be collected in a discussion.

Ultimately, I scheduled formal conclusion interviews with each participant (detailed in the next section) where I began by describing to the participants how the first showing of the video was part of my dissertation research and that I wanted to show it to them again prior to formally interviewing them. At the time, the participants did not know that the first viewing was part of the study. For this meeting, therefore, the video was shown to participants after which they were provided with the same protocol as they were given almost four months prior to that day. This protocol for this activity – entitled Best Practices Video Analysis – can be seen as Interview Protocol #4 with the appendix. Once participants had watched the video and completed the questionnaire, I transitioned into the final conclusion interview.

**Phase Nine: Conclusion Interview.** Prior to the end of the semester (and the senior-level methods course), I conducted final interviews with each participant regarding their views toward the aims of a democratic education, the use of various pedagogical strategies, and their intentions for their student teaching (which they were expected to begin in the spring of 2015 semester). Throughout the conclusion interviews, I continued to refrain from telling participants about the research questions underlying the current dissertation. The aim for such interviews was to collect more data on preservice teachers’ perspectives toward the use of discussion in the social studies and their understandings of
social studies education, broadly speaking. Such an interview, similarly, provided me
with a better understanding of the extent to which the participants developed throughout
the course of the semester given their teaching experience, course readings, in-class
discussions, and conversations with their peers. It should be noted that, in the interest of
time, I combined phases eight and nine into one session. In doing this, I first showed the
best practices video, had students respond to the written prompt questions regarding the
video, asked several questions regarding the teaching in the video, and then following
this with a formal conclusion interview.

**Data Sources**

The present study sought to understand how the participants defined, identified,
and associated a specific form of pedagogy within a complex and often abstract ideal of
democratic education. Because of this, the studied relied on an array of data sources to
provide valid and reliable findings. This section describes how the data was chosen, the
relationship it had with the study, and the means in which the data would assist the
validity of the data.

The following table restates the guiding research questions for the present study
and describes the data expected to answer each question. It should be noted the sources
listed might not explicitly answer the entire questions. Instead, they were seen as
potential sources for partially answering a question (or corroborate or refute information
from other data sources) Additionally, the sources allowed for converging lines of inquiry
as well as various means for data triangulation (Yin, 2014).

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<th>Research Question 1 and Sub-Questions</th>
<th>Data Exploring Each Question (and phases of data collection)</th>
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1. What is the nature of preservice social studies teachers’ conceptions of discussion as a pedagogical approach?

- Junior-Level Social Studies Methods interviews (*Pilot study data*)
- Junior-Level Social Studies Methods rationales (*pilot study data*)
- Lesson Plans in Junior and Senior-Level social studies methods courses (*Pilot study data and Continuous data*)
- Teaching rationales (*Continuous data*)
- Initial Interview (*phase I*)
- Best Practices Video Discussion and Written Reflection (*phase III and IV*)

A. How do preservice social studies teachers (PSTs) define discussion?

- Initial interviews asking about discussion (*phase I*)
- Writing prompts after initial interview (*phase II*)
- Interviews after field observations (*phases V, VI, VII*)
- Conclusion Interviews (*phase IX*)
- Best Practices video discussion and written reflection (*phase III and IV*)
- Interviews after field observations (*phases V, VI, VII*)

B. What is the nature of PST’s beliefs about discussion as a pedagogical approach?

- Teaching rationales which may describe discussion (*Additional Continuous data*)
- Initial interviews (*phase I*)
- Conclusion interviews (*phase IX*)

C. To what extent can PSTs identify discussion as a pedagogical approach?

- Best practices video and written responses to protocol (*phase III and IV*)
- Interviews on best practices video (*phase IV*)
- Interviews after field observations (*phases V, VI, VII*)

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<th>Research Question 2 and Sub-Questions</th>
<th>Data Exploring Question (and phases of data collection)</th>
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| 1. How do preservice social studies teachers connect practices of discussion with theories of democratic education | - Responses to prompts developed for class readings (*Additional continuous data*)
- Stated objectives within lesson and unit plans (*Additional continuous data and phases V, VI, VII*)
- Interviews on best practices video (*phase IV*)
- Interviews after field observations (*phases V, VI, VII*)
- In-class comments (*additional continuous data*)
- Interviews at the beginning of the semester (*phase I*)
- Interview at end of the semester (*phase IX*) |
| A. To what extent do PSTs internalize principles of | - Teaching rationales (*Additional continuous data*)
- Lesson and Unit Plans (*Additional continuous data*) |
Table 4: Variation of Yin’s Case Study Protocol

<table>
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<th>democratic education advocated for by a teacher education program?</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Written reflections on reading prompts (<em>Additional continuous data</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Initial interviews (<em>phase I</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Interviews after field observations (<em>phases V, VI, VII</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Conclusion interviews (<em>phase IX</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Course Syllabi (<em>Additional Continuous data</em>)</td>
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<td>• Course Readings (<em>Additional Continuous data</em>)</td>
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Data Collected from Participants’ Viewings of “Best Practices Video” Careful consideration was taken upon selecting a video to show to students within the senior-level methods course. The video needed to include an instructor of the social studies using some form of group-talk to engage students in a fluid discussion on either a current or critical event or issue. Moreover, the educator in the video needed to have fostered a student-centered environment in which the content discussed led to the inclusion of varying perspectives, a form of group-talk about collaboration as opposed to competition, and in which students appeared to argue in a manner reflective of capable citizens within the public sphere (reflecting the definitions and ideals of discussion as put forth in chapter two of the present study).

This selection of this video was critical to the current study, as it provided opportunities for various forms of data that could lead to answers to a primary question grounding this study: To what extent could preservice social studies teachers identify discussion as an instructional approach in a best practices video? The data collected regarding the video could help answer the question of how participants associated discussion with theories of democratic education. I attempted to do this by creating data through the facilitation of a discussion on the video on multiple occasions (both
individually and collectively) as well as by collecting participants’ written responses to an array of questions regarding the teaching occurring in the video.

**Professional Vision Statement.** In a manner similar to many rationale-based teacher-education programs, the assistant professor of the social studies methods course requires students within courses to develop a rationale for teaching the social studies (in other words, a teaching philosophy). Within the course syllabus, the assignment is described as a teaching philosophy “of your beliefs about the purpose of the social studies in a democratic pluralistic society” (Senior-Level Social Studies Methods Syllabus). Students are expected to use this 2 to 3-page statement to discuss the role of social studies within the secondary school curriculum, characteristics of ideal social studies teachers, the role of citizenship within the social studies, the development of effective citizens, and how citizenship will be addressed within their own classrooms.

The assignment – which is collected at the end of the fall semester, revised throughout the spring semester and resubmitted at the end of the participants’ student teaching – is meant to help students make the required associations between pedagogy and broad theories of democratic education. Because of this, it served as a critical element to the present study. The teaching philosophy (and its fluid nature) allowed for me to see the connections my participants made between their coursework (including readings, activities, and field experiences) with the forms of pedagogy they view as valuable for students of the social studies. An aim, therefore, was to see if the ideals stated by the participants matched their intended plans for teaching. Because of this, I chose to collect this statement in addition to lesson plans (submitted both individually
and within a larger unit plan) to see if they see if they supported or contradicted one another.

**Unit Plan.** A critical component to participants’ experiences with their Senior-Level Social Studies Methods course is their development of a practical unit plan. The purpose of the assignment is for preservice teachers to receive feedback on a unit plan from a veteran educator, generate curriculum (unit) of their own based on the standards and their various forms of pedagogy, and create a working unit plan for the following semester. The unit plan, therefore, was an integral part of the present study’s research in that it served as a culminating project for the course and, therefore, could provide a lens into the forms of pedagogy participants deemed both practical and valuable. My aim was to use the participants’ interviews and teaching philosophies (as well as their stated aims of a democratic education) to find evidence of such themes within their unit plan. For instance, if a participant emphasized the use of discussion as being critical to the social studies classroom, I sought to discover the extent to which they integrated discussion within their unit plan. The unit plan (and the individualized lessons comprising the unit) also had the potential to demonstrate if the proper associations were made in the development of the lessons. In this sense, I chose to look at the stated objectives of each lesson as well as the forms of pedagogy used to see if there existed direct links between objectives aligning with theories of democratic education and various modes of pedagogy (including discussion).

Finally, the unit plan provided direction for the final interviews. If, for instance, a participant emphasized the use of discussion within their unit plan, I attempted to delve
into participant’s thinking on why this was either valuable for the class or needed as a pedagogical approach. Such conversations spanning across data sources allowed me to triangulate both my data and the recurring themes in participants’ responses (on an individualized case level and within a cross-case analysis).

**Lesson Plans.** In a manner similar to that of the construction of a unit plan, students enrolled in Senior-Level Social Studies Methods were expected to develop three lesson plans throughout the course of the fall of 2014. These were allowed to become part of the unit plan, but did not necessarily have to if the student had new or better ideas. Unlike the unit plan, however, the three lesson plans were to be submitted throughout the course of the semester (though were to be all situated within the same unit of study). Students of the course were expected “to provide detailed descriptions of the student objectives, methods, and assessment possibilities” (Senior-level Social Studies Methods Syllabus). For that reason, the lesson plans served to triangulate with other sources and further validate the findings of the study. Occasionally, these lessons were observed in the classroom during one of the three observations. Chapter four makes specific note of when this occurred.

Similar to the unit plan, I was able to search for themes within each participant’s three submitted lesson plans and probe into why they made certain claims and used various methods. More specifically, I was able to pair the objectives listed within lesson plans with the various forms of instruction written in the plan and used in the lesson. This gave me a window into the extent to which the participants associated the use of discussion (if it was used at all) with the underlying principles of democratic education as
seen within their course readings, class discussions, and the program conceptual framework.

**Course Syllabi.** Because this research intended on studying the real-world context, a review of the experiences of the participants was required. Therefore, the syllabi for all of the courses taken within the social studies teacher education program were used as data sources within the present research study as part of the “additional continuous data”. I sought to use syllabi to better understand the program in which the participants would be graduating from by focusing on the listed aims of each course. The syllabi were also used for identify course descriptions, program themes, and student expectations (field experience hours, course assessments, course objectives). Ultimately, the syllabi were meant to provide a clearer picture of the context surrounding the participants and better understand if and when the secondary social studies education program encouraged the theories of democratic education

**Reading Prompts and Written Responses.** An additional assessment within the senior-level methods course were the participants’ reading prompts provided at the start of each class period. Such assignments are meant to serve as a means for the professor of the course to hold the students accountable but, also, “to serve as an interaction between [the students] thoughts and the author’s thoughts” (Senior Level Social Studies Methods Syllabus). In this sense, the instructor made it clear in the syllabus that he was not expecting nor wanting students to “regurgitate the information from the assigned readings.” Rather, he expected students to reflect on readings, place them within the
context of teaching, and discover why the specific readings are applicable to the social studies.

Such responses assisted my understanding of how the participants absorbed and interpreted readings and the connections they made between their pedagogy and that of the underlying theories of democratic education. I sought to use these critical forms of data to find themes among participants’ thinking toward the social studies and the connections they made between their readings, pedagogy, and expected forms of instruction. These reading prompts and accompanying responses helped triangulate consistent themes across other forms of data. I could identify if certain ideals that were described in the course readings were reiterated in unit plans, lesson plans, interviews, teaching philosophies, field observations, and other forms of data.

**Field Observation Data.** As part of phases five, six, and seven of the present research study, data was collected within the field placement participants completed for the senior-level methods course. In each of the three observations of each participant, I collected a variety of data intended to paint the clearest possible picture of the preservice teachers’ intentions for incorporating theories of democratic education into their course. Data from the field observations consisted of field notes taken throughout the observations, readings provided to students, and other supplementary documents in addition to audio recordings of the teaching. These recordings were later revisited and paired with field notes to ensure accuracy. Additionally, formal lesson plans were collected for the lessons taught during the observation if they differed from those
submitted within the senior-level methods course (participants were told by the assistant professor of the course they could use those when teaching if they wanted to do so).

The primary aim for the observations was to see if and to what extent participants used discussion within the classroom. If I observed a preservice teacher attempting to conduct a discussion during one of their observations, I attempted to discover why they chose to do this and what they thought about their implementation.

**Interviews.** As previously described within the data collection section of this chapter, interviews were conducted with participants throughout the study. The two primary interviews were conducted at the beginning of the fall 2014 semester (and the Senior-Level Social Studies methods course) as well as at the end of the semester. The initial interview was meant to gather two forms of information: biographical information of the participants and information regarding their broad ideas toward education. The latter of these two aims was especially important for this study, as it was impossible to expect to understand how participants conceptualized and valued discussion without gaining a full understanding of the ways in which they viewed education on a broad level. Because of this, the initial interview assisted in developing an understanding of what each preservice teacher thought about the social studies, democratic education, and citizenship prior to taking Senior-Level Social Studies Methods.

Conversely, the conclusion interviews provided a stronger understanding for how the preservice teachers’ views and understandings toward democratic education and discussion developed throughout the course of the semester. Though outside of the scope of this particular study, this information was vital as it allowed for me to develop an
understanding of how the senior-level methods course influenced their dispositions and the extent to which their ideas reflected those from four months earlier. In this sense, it provided me with another way to check for reliability by asking preservice teachers about their comments from the beginning of the semester and member-checking them to see if they agreed with their previous statements or wanted to adjust them based on newly learned theories.

**Data Analysis**

Patton describes data analysis as “identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying, and labeling the primary patterns in the data” (Patton, 2002, p. 463). Data analysis, however, is a complex process and without rigorous procedures, critical themes can become overlooked or misinterpreted and findings can be inaccurate or lacking in essential components (Yin, 2009). Effectively presenting a descriptive account of the phenomena under study required the organization, analysis, and presentation of my findings in a cohesive manner showing how data collected from multiple sources worked together to answer the guiding research questions (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). In other words, “without classification, there is chaos and confusion” (Patton, 2002, p. 463). Proper procedures, therefore, should be designed early in a research study to allow for an organized and cohesive presentation of the findings. Therefore, this section describes how I analyzed data and sought to obtain valid and reliable findings.

The first step was to “[develop] some manageable classification or coding scheme” (Patton, 2002, p. 463). By using a formalized coding scheme, I hoped to discover “codes” or “identify a concept, a central idea, though not necessarily a chapter
or section of the final product” (Glesne, 2008, p. 153). For the present study, I selected open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Khandkar, n.d.) as an initial phase of data analysis in an attempt to create “categories that cut across the data” (Merriam, 1998, p. 178). Glaser (1978) describes the process of open coding as “coding the data in every way possible… running the data open” (p. 56). During the open coding process occurring through data collection, I immersed myself in the data through extensive analysis of each source on a line-by-line basis (Walker & Myrick, 2006). I identified and defined codes and made notations when codes continued to appear throughout data collection and data analysis (Khandkar, n.d; Yin, 2009).

As I was collecting data during the initial open coding process, I continuously made notes and generated memos to point out possible themes that were starting to emerge from the codes. I collected memos as the data collection phase evolved to both bracket my subjectivities and remind myself of my evolving analysis (Glesne, 2008). The generation of these memos allowed for the investigation into the codes I had sensed throughout data collection to either confirm or expand upon them (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2014). The majority of the notes were placed within the specific computer-based files (as “comments” in Microsoft Word) or saved in an electronic journal that was a simple Word document in which I wrote down emerging ideas.

While I explored and coded the data throughout the semester, I continued to organize and redefine my themes based on new sources and information. I did this to make certain that my initial findings and ideas were both supported by new data and adjusted based on sources that were not included until the end of the data collection.
process (e.g., the conclusion interviews and late observations). My initial themes, therefore, were consistently checked for consistency and, when needed, adapted to new data and the findings present within them and new themes were consistently constructed based on the new data to make for the most authentic on-going analysis.

As I was coding the data, I was also organizing the data in a manner that would assist in the congruent process of both collecting and analyzing data. I did this through the development of individual “folders” meant to organize the robust amount of data drawn from such a range of sources. In other words, as data continued to be collected throughout the semester, it was saved to a specific folder on my password-protected computer (and through a cloud sharing, password-protected system) under the pseudonym of each participant. Each participant had their own electronic folder where all of their data was blinded of metadata and organized. The forms of data not tied to specific participants (syllabi, course readings, program frameworks) were placed in a folder titled “Assorted Data”.

Once all of the data for the semester had been collected and organized, I expanded upon the “on-going” open coding to find additional themes and/or refine those that I already have. This was done primarily through doing what Yin (2014) calls “playing” with the data. In this sense, I did a careful line-by-line reading of the data collected making notes on critical and relevant codes and themes that I previously identified. The use of such notes was inspired by Miles and Huberman’s suggestion of placing data in various categories based on similar themes. This thematic approach was paired with initial memos I developed while collecting data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glesne, 2008).
In other words, I used the initial codes I had found to create categories on a Microsoft Word document. As data continued to be collected, these initial codes expanded and evolved. In an attempt to find emergent categories and themes within the initial phases of data analysis - I used “patience, persistence, and going over and over the data using constant comparison” (Walker & Myrick, 2006, p. 552).

I initially analyzed my data as separate cases (Patton, 2002). The aim for using single-case reports initially was to see each participant individually given their own experiences and backgrounds prior to analyzing data across cases. This process included carefully reading through each “folder” created for the participants and developing “written reports” on their data. These included key themes, ideas, and quotes. More specifically, as participants continued to produce data, I organized the data into separate folders and documents that I could return to for an organized collection of data where I had made important and informal notes about certain pieces of data.

Patton (2002) claims “the initial focus [of cross-case analysis] is on full understanding of individual cases before those unique cases are combined or aggregated thematically” (p. 57). Patton summarizes this objective within case study research by claiming “The case study should take the reader into the case situation and the experience – a person’s life, a group’s life, or a program’s life” (p. 450). Doing this, Patton argues, ensures the grounding of emergent themes and categories within their own contexts before comparing them to other cases. Therefore, I intended for my research to reflect Patton’s description of the ideal case study in that I would provide readers first with descriptive analyses of individual cases and then analysis these reports in the next phase.
of data analysis, the cross-case analysis.

I used cross-case analysis to surface themes amongst participants. Patton (2002) describes cross-case analysis as a way to “search [for] patterns and themes that cut across individual experiences” (p. 57). Likewise, Yin states that within a cross-case analysis “a case study tries to explore whether the cases being studied have replicated or contrasted with each other.” (p. 167). Because the present study sought to assess the extent to which multiple preservice teachers associated the use of discussion with theories in democratic education, a cross-case analysis of the data was conducted.

For the cross-case analysis I looked to Miles and Huberman’s (1994) five strategies for exploring collected data: 1) putting information into different categories, 2) developing matrices and organizing data within such categories, 3) creating flowcharts and similar graphics, 4) tabulating the frequency of various events, and 5) ordering data into a temporal scheme. Due to the extensive amount of data I had collected, I chose to place the information from all of the sources into different (though thematic) categories. Therefore, once the individual folders and subsequent case reports had been developed, I created a “word table” (as recommended by Yin) to “display the data from the individual cases according to one or more uniform categories” (Yin, 2014, p. 165). I, however, developed “word/theme” tables within a single Microsoft Word document to incorporate broad themes that surfaced while I completed line-by-line analysis of both the untouched data and the individual case reports. In other words, prominent and relevant themes were noted upon readings of individual case reports and placed in pertinent categories. If, for instance, I found a consistent theme (e.g., discussion seen as important by participants), I
searched through my individual case reports for data supporting this from each participant and placed in within that section to see if the finding could be supported across participants and data sources.

Such themes, moreover, were then cross-referenced among individual case reports to discover consistencies and patterns within the data sets. The following chapter details these themes for each case. As themes began to appear as I conducted the cross case analyses, I made note of them on a separate “word/theme tables” in which I listed out relevant and critical themes and placed supporting evidence in appropriate columns. These themes – which I thoroughly detail in chapter five the present study - became the core findings of the study.

**Generalizability and Transferability**

The present study has the potential to provide insight into the relationship between the teacher education programs and preservice teachers’ conceptions toward discussion as a pedagogical approach. The findings, therefore, will likely be transferable to similar contexts. Guba (1981) claims that research meets a threshold for rigor and applicability when the findings can fit into contexts outside of the study. I attempted to reach an acceptable level of rigor and transferability within this qualitative study by providing thorough descriptions of the cases and context so that readers could apply the findings to similar teacher education programs.

**Limitations to the Present Study**

Although this study provides insight into the views preservice social studies teachers hold toward discussion, certain limitations to the present research deserve to be
acknowledged. The primarily limitation to the current study was the role of the researcher within the previous experiences of the participants. Because the researcher taught each of the students either for either one course (Junior Level Social Studies Methods) or two courses (Junior Level Social Studies Methods and Orientation to Education), it often became difficult to separate participants’ authentic visions of education and the views the researcher had instilled upon them within previous experiences. To offset this potential limitation, the researcher sought to include an array of data that would include content from the senior-level social studies methods course (a course taught by an assistant professor at the university), experiences from field placements (which would provide an unaltered view of their teaching), as well as interviews that occurred throughout the course of data collection to look for themes that may have evolved on account of new experiences occurring beyond the participants’ experiences with the researcher.

A second limitation to the study involved the length of the study. Because the primary form of data collection occurred throughout the fall of 2014, the data may have been limited, as it only incorporated 16 weeks of data. To prevent this issue from impacting the results, data was included from Junior Level Social Studies Methods as a way to triangulate research and better support any findings and themes. In other words, the research – which was often described as (and attempted to be) a longitudinal study – was heavily grounded in the data collected throughout one semester and the supporting data coming from a previous class taken a year prior to senior-level social studies methods. Therefore, this study would have benefitted from a more extended study in which data was collected on the participants for a longer period of time.
A third limitation to the present research meriting attention involves the field placements of the participants. The current study attempted to describe the experiences of the participants within their placements within a vacuum. The cooperating teachers who were kind enough to volunteer their classrooms to both the participants and the present study were told on the first day of the study that the research only include the necessary and foundational information about their classrooms. The teachers, for the matter, were assured that neither the school, their students, or themselves would be detailed to any point where they could be recognized. To successfully do this, I provided as little detail about them as possible within the present dissertation. When I did have to mention them as a means for exploring the participants’ field experiences, I did so in a manner that was mostly framed around their preservice teacher’s beliefs about effective teaching or the forms of teaching used while I was conducting observations. Unless it was found to be absolutely necessary to a participant’s narrative, all information regarding cooperating teachers was not included in the individual case reports. Because of this limitation, the field experiences lacked a degree of detail and the descriptions of the field placements (and teaching experiences) of the participants did not take into consideration how their cooperating teachers impacted their teaching and perspectives toward their lessons. To protect the research from losing reliability due to this limitation, participants were observed multiple times and all claims were triangulated with a range of other data. For instance, if a participant made a comment after an observation claiming that they wanted to use discussion in their classroom but could not on account of their cooperating teacher,
this comment was compared to other remarks regarding their intentions for using discussion and their vision of an effective classroom.

A fourth limitation to the current study dealt with the findings. Because this study relied on a range of data coming from a many different contexts, it often became difficult to decipher which components of the participants’ experiences influenced their conceptions the most. In other words, this study took into account multiple teacher education courses taught by several instructors, a broad conceptual framework, field placements with a variety of students and cooperating teachers, and an array of readings, discussions, and projects.

Collectively, these sources all painted a very robust picture of the participants and their conceptions and use of discussion, but the data became difficult to separate in terms of influence on the participants. For instance, participants’ throughout the data collection phase took multiple education-based courses with a variety of instructors (e.g., senior-level social studies methods, disciplinary literacy). Because of these two classes occurring simultaneously, it became difficult to separate the extent to which each participant was influenced by the different conversations, readings, and general experiences they had within each course. Another similar example involves how the actual professors the participants dealt with on a weekly basis impacted their ways of thinking. While the course they were situated in for the current study was a critical theorists, the other professors whose classes they were enrolled in also likely had an impact on their understandings of teaching. It should be noted, however, that when the data clearly demonstrated a connection between a single component of the data collection
and a change of conception, I made note of it throughout the individual case reports and findings.

A fifth and final limitation to the present study involves the make-up of the dissertation participants. Because the university in which the study took place is primarily white and from middle to upper class backgrounds, finding participants who represented various races, cultures, and socioeconomic status was difficult. All six participants were white and came from families who provided for them and constantly emphasized education as a priority. This was not surprising, as Causey (1999) point out, “Colleges of education face the daunting task of preparing predominantly White middle-class college students with limited or no experiences with persons from another ethnicity or social class to be effective teachers of diverse students” (p. 33). Diversity, in the present study, therefore, was sought through students’ personal experiences (e.g., where they were from, political beliefs), previous comments (justifications for education as noted in the junior-level social studies methods, interest in specific areas such as content), and intentions for after graduation (plans to teach certain grade levels or subjects or go to graduate school). With this said, a lack of emphasis on social justice may have been attributed to students’ backgrounds and personal experiences. Though there appeared little “pushback” when such ideas were introduced to them in both junior and senior-level social studies methods, it is difficult to say whether issues of race, gender, religion, and SES would have been more prevalent throughout data collection had the participants been more diverse or if the school in which they were attending had a more diverse body of students. Because of this, future research seeking to assess preservice teachers’ understandings of democratic
education (and specific components to the term such as critical theories, citizenship education and multiculturalism) should make a concerted effort to find a more diverse body of participants who can provide a picture of students’ views toward democratic education and its association with discussion that is representative of all the pluralist society making up the United States of America.

Conclusion

Because this study sought to explore, understand, and describe the extent of which multiple preservice social studies teachers associate discussion with critical themes in democratic education, a qualitative, multiple case study approach was appropriate to attain the most valid and reliable findings. Each participant – serving as a “case” – first received individual attention in the form of an individual case report. Following this, a cross-case analysis was conducted to determine relevant themes and patterns across the varying participants.

Data was collected from an array of sources dating back from the fall of 2013. The primary data collection, however, took place in participants’ Senior-Level Social Studies Methods course that was situated within the teacher education program at a large southeastern university. Data consisted of interviews, writing prompts, field observations, unit and lesson plans, responses to reading prompts, and informal conversations conducted both inside and outside of the course and throughout the participants’ field experiences. Data analysis consisted first of using open-coding to collect prominent and relevant themes throughout data collection. Throughout this phase, I generated individual folders for each participant and subsequently turned these into individualized case
reports. These reports were synthesized in a cross-case analysis. The findings of such analyses will be presented in chapter five.
CHAPTER FOUR: Individual Case Reports

Introduction

The present chapter will provide individual case reports on each participant. I will provide more detailed descriptions of the participants, taking into account both biographical information as well as perspectives within social studies education. Moreover, this chapter will seek to provide readers with a fully developed vision of the participants both prior to entering into the social studies education program as well as nearing their completion of Senior-Level Social Studies Methods.

The chapter, therefore, will exclusively present each of the participants’ backgrounds and then philosophical standpoints within the field of education and – more specifically – social studies education in regards to discussion. After a brief biography of each participant has been presented, the structure of each participant’s case report will follow the following order: a) Participant’s conceptions of democratic education, b) Participant’s visions of discussion in the social studies classroom c) An overview of participant’s teaching, and d) A summary of each participant that seeks to synthesize the previous sections. The first of these sections will provide an overview of how participants conceptualized democratic education. The overview will be explain the associations they made between discussion and their own constructs of such an abstract term (Parker & Hess, 2001; Preskill, 1997). Following this, participants’ visions of discussion will be thoroughly described. It will be within this section that various forms of data throughout the course of the study will be presented to thoroughly depict how the participants viewed the practice of discussion. The third section – that detailing the participants’ teaching –
will seek to describe the observations of the six participants. Finally, a synthesis of the previous sections will be presented for each individual case that details the extent to which the participants used discussion, conceptualized its practice, and tied it to their own ideas regarding democratic education. It should be noted that because each case study is meant to provide a thorough analysis of each participant, various sub-sections will be added when appropriate based on critical themes found within each participant’s narrative. Similarly, it is important to acknowledge that though the sections have been created to show themes and provide an organized synthesis of many complex themes, the sections are not meant to be mutually exclusively and often attempt to build upon one another for the most cohesive and accurate depictions of each participant.

Adriana.

At the beginning of the fall of 2014, Adriana – a white, female – was 21 years old. She was a fourth year student intending on graduating the following May with a bachelors degree in social studies education. Unlike the other participants who either planned to enter directly into the classroom indefinitely upon graduating or going to graduate school for a masters in education or history, Adriana’s plan was more complex and involved her working within Teach for America for two or three years before returning to law school. More specifically, Adriana’s ultimate goal did not involve being a social studies teacher for more than a few years. Rather, it involved her obtaining her Juris Doctorate and continuing within the field of education reforming policy.
Adriana’s conceptions of democratic education.

Adriana’s experience in the senior level social studies methods course was different than her counterparts in that she often grappled with a dichotomy between theory and practice. This was a topic the professor of her course consistently refuted by noting how the theory produced within the field of education should inform the practice of teaching social studies at the secondary level. The argument was consistently made to the participants of the senior level methods course that theory and practice within education are not mutually exclusive. Adriana, on a number of occasions, gently described in her interviews and written reflections her concern for how learning about marginalized groups and theoretical principles of social studies education would assist her in developing lesson plans for her courses the following semester as she student taught four economics courses (a topic she was unfamiliar with and concerned about teaching throughout the semester).

For instance, in the fifth week of her course, Adriana was asked to “free write” an evaluation of the course so that the assistant professor could tailor the course to his students responses. Much of what Adriana wrote was extremely positive, however, she also alluded to the fact that:

I recently learned I will be teaching 5 sections of Econ next semester, a subject which I am not nearly prepared to teach and I am worried that my LGBQT lesson plan creation will not help me with this. Although I do see value in adding diverse perspectives into the classroom, I fear that focusing my assignments on this is not
going to help me be the best economics teacher to my students next semester.

(Adriana, Reading Prompt, September 30, 2014)

In other words, Adriana spent much of the senior-level methods course developing a unit plan for the course grounded in the history of a marginalized group (originally this was LGBTQ individuals, but was later changed to women in society). The project consisted of partners in the Senior-Level Social Studies Methods course working together throughout the semester to create at least six corresponding lessons on a historically marginalized group. The purpose was to provide an “exceptional curriculum unit on diverse perspectives in the social studies” to K12 students who would then be able to construct a narrative on the group beyond what was taught in a traditional textbook (Description of Unit Plan from Assistant Professor of Senior-Level Methods Course). Though she appreciated this opportunity and saw the value in doing so, she failed to make the connection of how such an experience would ultimately help her teach the following semester. Adriana later expounding upon this idea by noting that “I am just very concerned that my students will not receive the quality education they deserve next semester if I am spending my time researching topics for our fun and fictitious lesson” (Reading Prompt, September 30, 2014). From this it was evident that Adriana had constructed a dichotomy between the theories discussed in her methods course and the types of teaching she viewed as effective in the social studies classroom. Creating such a dichotomy between coursework within teacher education and the actual practice of teaching was neither exclusive to Adriana nor new to the field of education. Zeichner (2010) notes that “one of the central problems that has plagued college and university-
based preservice teacher education for many years [has been] the disconnect between the campus and school-based components of programs” (p. 479). Adriana, in other words, consistently noted the value in what she was learning, but often felt that she was being taught more of what and why to teach than how to teach.

It should be noted that Adriana’s primary interest was in learning how to provide students with an effective education. Often times, this goal trumped her interest in learning how to use the principles she learned in her courses regarding democratic education (which, it should be noted, often appeared to be mutually exclusive). For instance, Adriana claimed, “I am terrified to create lesson plans grounded in [critical theories] and sometimes wish this semester’s classes were allotted for us to use the techniques and methods we are learning and try to create lesson plans for the subjects we will be teaching next semester” (In-class written reflection, September 30, 2014). In other words, Adriana – like many preservice teachers (Lotter, 2004; Veenman, 1984) – often concerned herself with issues of classroom management, content coverage, and the task of engaging her students and failed to understand how she could incorporate the broad and grandiose themes of her program at the same time.

This is not to say that Adriana did not understand the aims of a democratic education. Adriana demonstrated a keen understanding of the field of education and its many components and objectives. In her initial interview in the fall of 2014, Adriana was asked to describe the purposes of a democratic education. Initially, she responded by saying citizens should take a “legitimate role in society”. After being asked to expand on this, Adriana responded with “where you’re not just a robot and you accept everything,
but where you want to be involved and you want to question things and really see if it’s the best it can be. And if not, try to improve it I guess.” (Initial Interview, August 20, 2014). This quote reflected many of Adriana’s ideas and her larger vision of the classroom and – more broadly, schools – as being locations where students learn more than what is simply taught in textbooks and lectures. As an additional example of Adriana’s vision of and democratic education, Adriana noted:

Social studies educators have a moral obligation to inform their students, but not to shape their thoughts on any given topic. Social Studies education presents an opportunity to let students create their own opinions and gain a deeper understanding on why society exists the way it does and how that can be changed for better or worse. We have the responsibility to provide the tools for the students make their own decisions and question the status quo. (In-Class Written Response, August 26, 2014)

Such a vision also reflects many critical principles driving the aims of education including – though not limited to – critical thinking, autonomous decision-making, citizenship education, and participatory citizenship. Adriana recognized the value of the social studies as a place to develop citizens who would make positives changes to a democratic society and did so in a way that showed a great deal of potential for future understanding.

Adriana was more open than her peers about the role of education to overturn the inequities in society. When asked to write down the purposes of education and why the social studies is different than other content areas on her first day of her senior-level
methods course, Adriana listed that schools should work to “question the status quo” (August 26, 2014). Though she did not elaborate on this idea in her response, she was one of the only respondents to mention either the status quo or make the connection that schools play a pivotal role in overturning inequities and inequalities through reform-oriented teaching. This was critical because it was one of the few times that ideals discussed by scholars who take a relatively critical stance to the field of education (or see it as a potential for reform-oriented pedagogy) were evoked. In this sense, Adriana’s comment about overturning the status quo reflected ideas put forth by Ladson-Billings, Delpit, and Banks. Banks (1987), specifically, notes that, “knowledge about why many ethnic groups are victimized by institutionalized racism and class stratification are needed in a sound social studies curriculum that accurately and sensitively reflects the experiences of ethnic groups” (p. 535). For Adriana to mention the status quo as an essential component to the social studies classroom is essential to her understanding and applying many of the aforementioned theories to her teaching. An additional example of Adriana’s understanding of the aims of education (and, specifically, the social studies) can be seen in her philosophy of social studies education in which she details the role of the social studies in assisting historically marginalized groups. Adriana notes early in her paper that:

Students are often force fed a single overview of historical events told from the perspective of the majority. This not only isolates minority students who may feel disconnected from the material, but also provides a limited and bias view of any situation… By analyzing different sources, students advance their
knowledge of a particular topic and are exposed to different and potentially opposing viewpoints. This allows them to construct their own narrative and evaluate history in a new context rather than memorizing a single version of history. Having the ability to view all situations in history, politics, and simply in society with this constructivist eye broadens student’s knowledge of the world and provides a multicultural understanding. (Adriana, Philosophy of Education)

Though such remarks were often overshadowed by visions of democratic education tying into citizenship education, Adriana did appear to have a rudimentary understanding of social-justice oriented education. And her ability to describe the “single narrative” mirrored such pieces as Delpit’s (1988) *The Silenced Dialogue* or Banks’s (1993) notion of mainstream knowledge. In many cases, this was tied to ideas of constructing knowledge in the classroom, improving society through rationale thinking. A statement made on the first day of class in which Adriana claimed demonstrated this:

Social studies educators have a moral obligation to inform their students, but not to shape their thoughts on any given topic. Social Studies education presents an opportunity to let students create their own opinions and gain a deeper understanding on why society exists the way it does and how that can be changed for better or worse. We have the responsibility to provide the tools for the students make their own decisions and question the status quo. (In-Class Written Response, August 26, 2014)
This quote is interesting as it presents Adriana’s recognition of certain ideals in the social studies regarding social justice and democratic education for equality. However, as noted, Adriana’s understanding of a social studies classroom that is student-centered and aiming toward a reform-oriented approach was mostly trumped by her fear of incorporating such notions into her teaching the following semester. Adriana’s understandings of popular ideals within the social studies (i.e., democratic education, active student engagement, worthwhile learning) often came out in her work, but these ideas rarely matched the ways in which she described how she would eventually be as a classroom teacher. When asked to describe her thoughts on constructivist teaching, for instance, Adriana noted that “The readings made constructivist teaching seem as though it was 100% student driven, and project based which I do not see as a truly viable option for any classroom to abide by” (In-Class, Written Reflection, September 23, 2014). In other words, Adriana – like many of her peers – feared the idea of giving up control in her classroom and trusting her students to learn the standard-based material on their own. Adriana, therefore, saw the value in taking a constructivist approach, but saw its implementation as being a potential issue.

**Adriana’s vision of discussion.**

Prior to detailing Adriana’s vision of discussion, it is first necessary assess how Adriana conceptualized discussion, felt about it as a pedagogical approached, and the extent to which she could identify it when in practice. When directly asked at the beginning of the semester what discussion was, Adriana wrote that it involves “Students sharing their thoughts and opinions on the material to learn from one another” (Post
Initial Interview Questionnaire, September 2, 2014). Expanding upon this broad definition, Adriana noted two months later when responding to Diana Hess’s (2004) reading, “What’s the Use of Discussion?” by saying that “[Discussion] allows students to construct their own narrative and use their prior knowledge to make an argument, and then by sharing this, the other students benefit from their unique perspective” (In-Class, Written Response, October 14, 2014). Moreover, Adriana remarked that discussion as a pedagogical approach “is actual [sic] more useful than reading scholarly articles that present different narratives because students feel more related and are interconnected to their classmates” (In-class Written Response, October 14, 2014). These responses – albeit relatively foundational in nature – demonstrate a strong amount of growth in Adriana’s thoughts regarding discussion from the previous year. In her junior-level social studies methods course, Adriana was asked about the role of discussion in the classroom. She was responded to this question by noting that “if you can get kids to engage in dialogue in the classroom you would learn more about the students and what they’ve experienced but how they see like a specific event in history or something like that and everyone would have a different opinion on it” (Adriana, Interview, September 17, 2013). Such a view – though in no way inaccurate – demonstrates a relatively rudimentary and incomplete understanding of the place of group-talk in the classroom. Adriana’s ideas during junior-level social studies methods were grounded in principles of student engagement and teacher knowledge of students rather than democratic education and the larger connection of schooling to society. However, several data sources collected within her senior-level methods course demonstrate a burgeoning connection between broad
principles of democratic education and the use of discussion in the classroom. For instance, her initial mentions of “overturning the status quo” and “providing voices to historically marginalized groups” at the beginning of the semester are reflected in her descriptions of discussion as being a place where students can “construct their own narratives” and “interconnect with one another”. This likely was on account of a number of experiences including course readings, in-class discussions, written prompts, and her field experience that involved her working with a veteran teacher who was seemingly familiar with the literature produced in the field of education.

Adriana’s data demonstrates a growing understanding of the connections between theory and practice as well as schools and society. She started connecting the role of schools in creating a more democratic society through various practices including – though not limited to – discussion. When shown the best practices video for the first time, Adriana responded to the questionnaire provided by identifying the use of discussion and debate. When asked what instructional practices were used, Adriana specifically noted “debate style class, discussion”. Though she did not differentiate between the two (or select which one the teacher in the video was using), this was important as it did reflect Adriana’s ability to identify group-talk as a form of instruction. Adriana also used written questionnaire provided after the viewing of the video to mention of the constructivist approach occurring within the classroom (referring to the lesson as “Good constructivist teaching”). Adriana appears to have been on the verge of connecting how the use of a collaborative talk-based effort could lead students constructing their own narratives and interpretations within both the classroom and the curriculum. Stopping short of
mentioning how discussion can help students create interpretations that challenge the prevailing narratives, Adriana appeared to be well on her way to making the critical association between discussion and issues of social justice and democratic education.

Despite this growth however, both Adriana’s formal teaching (which will be discussed momentarily) as well as the lesson plans she created for her junior and senior level methods courses demonstrated a tendency to approach discussion as an addition to a separate activity, as opposed to as the foundation for a lesson. In other words - and as will be described in chapter five - Adriana used discussion as an isolated activity instead of a component of her entire lesson. For instance, in the lesson plan she created for Senior-Level Social Studies Methods, Adriana and her partner (who, though not in the study, agreed to let several pieces of data that she worked on be used) tried to include a “combination of contextual note taking and discussion based class interaction throughout the entire lesson” (Adriana and Partner, Initial Lesson Plan, Senior Level Social Studies Methods, Fall 2014). The lesson itself, which focused on contemporary gender issues, started with a “skeleton PowerPoint” in which “students [were] expected to participate and answer questions in order to activate and build on prior knowledge” (Initial Lesson Plan, Senior Level Social Studies Methods Course, Fall 2014). Students then completed an activity using social media and, finally, concluded with a “short discussion” on whether or not women and men are equal.

Adriana and her partner’s initial lesson plan is interesting because it seems to demonstrate that collaborative work was a priority for Adriana and her partner. Throughout the expected 90-minute class, students were provided with five different
instances where they were expected to collaborate together (three of those times they had specific mentions of “discussion”). Though there was certainly an emphasis on covering specific content (as demonstrated by the frequent mentions of note-taking and PowerPoint), there also seems to exist an emphasis on a student-centered environment.

Interestingly, however, Adriana and her partner’s final lesson plan submitted for the senior level social studies methods course was adjusted to be framed around a lecture and a Webquest. At the conclusion of the Webquest, students would be asked to “discuss the content” within the “closure” portion of the lesson. Though certainly nothing wrong with this idea, it demonstrates Adriana (and, perhaps, her partner’s) transition into a more “traditional” lesson. Though the justification for this decision was never answered, it seems important to note that over two months had passed between the submission of the initial and the final lesson plan. In that time, Adriana and her partner had been through eight class sessions, approximately 25 hours of their field placement, and had their lesson scrutinized by the assistant professor of the course as well as their peers. Again, this shows evidence of an evolving vision of teaching that focuses on making teaching more practical and teacher-centered.

Adriana’s teaching.

Adriana’s understanding of the connection between discussion within the social studies and broad themes of democratic education was seen elsewhere as the semester progressed and more data was collected. Of the two observations conducted of Adriana, her teaching went from being almost entirely teacher-centered to an approach more grounded getting students actively engaged in the content and various forms of
collaboration. The first observation – conducted on September 25, 2014 – consisted almost entirely of a lecture on the Bill of Rights that fell short of generating any real discussion or student engagement; a fact that Adriana later acknowledged in her post-observation interview when referring to her teaching as “pretty average”. Students throughout this lesson quietly sat and took notes while Adriana read from her cooperating teacher’s PowerPoint slides. Though she provided opportunities for discussion (primarily asking if their Constitutional Rights had ever been violated), she failed to provide students with the opportunity to exchange opinions and make the conversation their own (let alone discuss larger issues relating to human rights).

This was extremely interesting due to the fact that in her previous junior-level social studies methods course, Adriana had coincidently generated a lesson plan on how she would teach the Bill of Rights in the future. Within this hypothetical lesson plan, Adriana noted that she would spend 20 minutes on the Amendments of the Constitution and having a “Class discussion about what amendments each group chose to ratify and why” (Adriana, Junior-Level Social Studies Methods, Lesson Plan). Considering this, Adriana’s approach for teaching about the Constitution in the fall of 2014 differed greatly from her actual teaching of the subject (specifically focusing on the component of integrating discussion) over a year after having created her original lesson plan.

When asked shortly after her observation on September 25, 2014 what about the lesson she felt went well, Adriana responded by saying “Um, I really don’t think anything… I thought it was all around a pretty average um lesson so I don’t think there was anything that I was like ‘yeah, that went great, I want to make sure that happens
every time’” (Adriana, Post Observation Interview, September 25, 2014). Adriana made it clear within this interview that she was cognizant of the teacher-centered nature of her lesson and noted that she would have preferred to include more debate and collaboration amongst her students when teaching about the Bill of Rights. For instance, when asked what she would have done differently, Adriana claimed, “Ideally I’d like to have lessons that aren’t just me lecturing and students taking notes for the first half of it.” (Post-Observation Interview, September 25, 2014). Adriana supported this notion of lecturing being “average” by making claims of how her program always advocated for a student-centered approach to teaching. When asked to describe her field experience, for instance, she claimed, “it is still a lecture based class which most of my … courses have taught me that this is ineffective and contrary to the constructivist teaching methods which I should be implementing in my classroom” (Free Write, September 26, 2014). Though Adriana did not make a specific mention of an interest to incorporate discussion into any subsequent lessons, her understanding that she had not sufficiently reached the objectives of the teacher education program appeared evident in the way she spoke about her lesson (i.e., labeling it as “traditional” and “average”).

During her second observation (November 24, 2014) Adriana used a form of pedagogy that allowed for students to engage in conversation with one another on issues they faced on a consistent basis. More specifically, Adriana asked her students whether or not they felt it was ethical for employers to use the Internet to learn more about candidates for a position. Upon asking this question, a seemingly natural conversation occurred amongst the students, the cooperating teacher, and occasionally Adriana (who
mainly served as a distant facilitator for the fifteen minute group-talk). Adriana noted during the post-observation interview that the collaboration often consisted of the same three or four students speaking their opinion, but that the majority of the 20 students did voluntarily speak at least one time.

Immediately after the lesson concluded, Adriana was asked about this portion of her lesson, to which she responded that:

I do think there were multiple people who expressed opinions and there were some differing opinions those were nice too. I really didn’t have to do a lot of talking. I didn’t have to continue asking questions, it wasn’t a Q&A. One student would say something and then another student would be, like, “yeah, I agree I think that’s stupid because…” so they were kind of building off each other for most of it cause that’s preferably for me. I didn’t have to coaxed them. (Adriana, Post Observation Interview, November 24, 2014)

Such a quote represents Adriana’s ability to identify this portion of her lesson as a foundational discussion in which her students were collaborating to with one another in a student-entered environment. Whether the students were simply more interested in the topic or the opportunity to collaborate with their peers, Adriana’s understanding of what “effective” teaching is in the classroom and how it can be implemented through the use of discussion appeared to have progressed beyond a teacher-centered approach. Adriana recognized that while the class was communicating with one another, she was going beyond rote memorization to a context reflecting a classroom community. Her students
were exchanging perspectives, sharing conflicting opinions, and listening to one another on a topic relevant to their own lives.

It should be noted that throughout the course of data collection, Adriana consistently noted the support she received from her cooperating teacher as well as her high opinion of his ability to engage his students. Adriana appeared to both respect her cooperating teacher as an educator, but was also hesitant to try anything that did not involve emulating him or using his own lesson plans. In other words, because of her high opinion of him and the way she saw his lessons “working” in the classroom, she consistently used the lessons that he provided to her despite the autonomy that he seemed to provide her with throughout the semester. Adriana, therefore, willingly rejected the freedom she was allotted and chose to take a more conservative route in her lessons.

**Summary of Adriana.**

Adriana’s greatest strength throughout her methods courses was her ability to be a “quick study” where she synthesized an extensive amount of content from a variety of sources. Throughout the course of the semester, Adriana’s visions of both the theory within the social studies and the “best practices” which bring these theories into the class continued to evolved and become more sophisticated. However, Adriana’s views toward both the classroom and the use of discussion never crossed the threshold where she was connecting discussion and democratic education within the social studies classroom. Even when assessing her lesson regarding employers ‘Googling’ potential candidates for positions, she did not connect a lesson she considered effect with the principles of democratic education discussed within the social studies. She, instead, chose to
emphasize how the students were more engaged in the lesson and that she felt the class was more student-centered than her previous lesson, which was a consistent theme in her data on describing effective social studies classrooms.

However, conversations and formal assessments consistently demonstrated an extreme level of growth over the two courses she had taken throughout the pilot study and the subsequent dissertation research. Toward the end of her second to last semester at the university in which the current study took place, Adriana had begun to see the social studies, the public school classroom, and the use of discussion as something more than solely a method for “engaging” students.

**Fran.**

During primary data collection in the fall of 2014, Fran – also a white, female, was 22 years old and going through her final year of her undergraduate degree in social studies education. As previously noted in chapter three of the current study, Fran’s upbringing played a large role in her becoming a social studies teacher. While each of the five other participants had reasons for going into the field of education regarding the students and the content, Fran made multiple references to her family as being inspiration for her interest in teaching. Her dad was – and at the time of the study, continued to be – a history teacher while her mom majored in history in college and was described as having maintained an interest in the study of history. Because of this, Fran continuously referenced her parents as raising her in an environment that emphasized both teaching and the study of history.
Fran’s conceptions of democratic education.

Reflecting the responses of many of the other participants, Fran’s ideals of democratic education often were broad and tied to principles of citizenship education and helping students obtain “The Good Life” (to reference the aforementioned ideas put forth by Gutmann). Fran consistently alluded to ideas of having students grow into rational citizens who had as many opportunities to achieve their own goals as possible. Moreover, Fran’s vision of democratic education frequently referenced the development of individuals who would improve society, as described in the works of Parker (2004), Dinkelman (1999), Hess (2004), and other prominent social studies educators. For instance, when asked during her initial interview about the purposes of education, Fran claimed that:

I think that the aims of education are to prepare students and make them functioning members of society. You know and prepare them for what they want to do in life whether that’s to go to college or go straight into the work force I think that education’s goal is to help kids figure out what they want to do and then give them all of the tools necessary to get to that goal. (August 20, 2014)

Moreover, Fran’s visions of democratic education often revolved around the idea of providing students with opportunities to both contribute to society and achieve the goals they wanted to with their life. Collectively, Fran’s ideas of democratic education can be boiled down to the notion that everyone should have an equal opportunity to do what they wish and, in doing so, contribute to society at large.
Democratic education and diversity.

Fran stood out as a participant as she was one of the only participants to mention diversity within her initial philosophy of education (generated in junior-level social studies methods and revised for the senior-level course). The reason this was interesting was because Fran mentioned multiculturalism even prior to having taken a social studies specific course. Whereas most students mentioned democratic education as a principle, Fran explicitly stated:

> It is also essential that teachers focus on the plight of individual groups and address diversity that may not be well developed in the text book [sic] or the standards, but is just as essential to the development of world citizens by developing their understanding and tolerance for diversity (Initial Philosophy of Education, Submitted September 9, 2014)

Fran expounded upon this idea of diversity by noting the importance of not simply accepting the diversity of a pluralistic nation like America, but also understanding others and teaching tolerance (though she stopped at the idea of reform-oriented action):

> Simply acknowledging diversity will not further students as citizens because students are already aware of diversity. What will help further students understanding of diversity will be to use social studies classrooms to foster acceptance of diversity and show how it contributes to our society. It is important to engrain in students the importance of diversity in shaping the society that we live in today, and how it continues to shape our society. Embracing diversity in the classroom leads to a wider variety of interpretations, which in turn creates a
broader sense of understanding and acceptance in the students. (Initial Philosophy of Education, Submitted September 9, 2014)

Fran, additionally, made an intriguing statement regarding the use of teachable moments and encouraging discussion on real world events in the same document. Several other participants in their philosophies noted the use of real-world application of skills learned in the social studies, but Fran was the only one to do so in a manner that was loosely connected to the aims of the university’s teacher education program and the principle components of the current study:

> It is also essential to capitalize on teachable moments. If a student asks a question about a local political issue, a good social studies teacher should at least answer the students [sic] question, ideally going a little further and embracing the moment for discussion. While this may not always be practical, it is important to use moments like this to keep students engaged in the world around them and to understand how the lessons they learn in class directly relate to the outside world (Initial Philosophy of Education, Submitted September 9, 2014).

Such a quote demonstrates Fran’s associations between discussion and various arenas of democratic education (e.g., current issues and events, participatory citizenship, creating an informed citizenry).

Fran’s attention to teachable moments consisting of controversy and critical issues (such as diversity) did what few other participants did in that they were loosely connected to the importance of integrating discussion into the social studies classroom. For instance, while watching the best practices video, Fran was the only participant to connect the
discussion occurring within the video to principles of democratic education and “good”
citizenship:

I think when they [the students in the video] walk out of that class they will have
experience with discussion and forming opinions and listening to other people and
then restating opinions or saying ‘I disagree because’ when they walk out they
have experience in cultivating that experience of discussion and that’s essential to
becoming a democratic citizen. (Best Practices Video reflection, In-class,
September 14, 2014)

Though this quote did not necessarily discuss the incorporation of multiple voices, it does
allude to the fact that students get the opportunity to participate with multiple students
within a classroom setting while they exchange views and learn to participate in
discourse. Fran, therefore, saw discussion as a way to express opinions and teach students
how to engage in conversation with one another. It is at least worth noting that Adriana’s
previous quote indicates a foundational understanding of how discussion and democratic
education are linked in the social studies classroom.

Fran stood out amongst the six participants in that she not only had a strong
interest in social studies education, she also worked to apply what she had been taught in
her readings and courses to contribute to an ongoing discourse in the program over
democratic education. The vast majority of her comments in class and in her written
assignments (e.g., reading responses, philosophy of education, lesson unit plan), for that
matter, incorporated the use of democratic citizenship. And though, again, these ideas
were often relatively vague and unfounded, they hinted at a larger interest and understanding of the field of education in a way that was uncontested.

**Fran’s visions of discussion.**

Much like the other five participants, Fran frequently emphasized her interest in using discussion in the social studies classroom.

I envision myself utilizing discussion and engaging lecture. While my classroom will have its fair share of activities, for the most part the day-to-day look of my classroom will be a discussion-based lecture. Most likely, I will incorporate analysis of primary documents as much as possible to reinforce the lessons. (Post Initial Interview Follow Up Questions, September 5, 2014)

This theme of exchanging perspectives was one that frequently underlined Fran’s ideas toward the use of discussion in the social studies classroom. For instance, when asked later in the semester about the use of discussion in the social studies classroom (expanding on an assigned reading by Diana Hess), Fran noted in class that:

The skills of communicating effectively is [sic] a skill they can improve upon through discussion. You’ll say you’re opinion if your debating and someone may try to refute what you’re saying and then you’re like “well, that’s not exactly what I meant”… so you are able to redefine … and they redefine their opinions and say “oh, I didn’t think of that point of view” and work that into their opinion and entertain the idea of other opinions without accepting them as fact… the mark of an intelligent mind according to Aristotle. (In-Class Comment, October 14, 2014).
Again, it appears that Fran’s primary justification for using discussion is to teach students not about content, but instead about how to engage in conversation with one another in a mature and rational manner. By channeling Aristotle’s ideas of entertaining other’s perspectives without accepting them, Fran is noting how discussion can teach students to listen to and respond to the views of their peers without formally accepting them. Moreover, Fran’s conceptions about and beliefs toward discussion are not clearly defined by principles of equality and tolerance, but they are likely informed by the exchanging of ideas through interacting with individuals who have contrasting beliefs and different experiences.

Fran, however, also alluded to ideas of knowledge construction. For instance, in her initial interview on August 20, 2014, she was asked to describe an ideal social studies teacher. To this prompt, Fran responded by stating that:

So I think a good social studies teacher just needs to be open to the fact that you know it’s not a black or white and that you know if kids want to discuss something further you shouldn’t just throw the brakes on and say we have to get to this slide in the PowerPoint today.

Fran’s comment regarding not all content being “black and white” demonstrates an understanding of a constructivist approach to teaching (which was introduced to her in her junior level social studies methods course and, again, in the senior-level of the course a few weeks after this comment was made). Additionally, saying that teachers should not just “throw on the brakes if kids want to discuss something” demonstrates an awareness that having students collaborate when interpreting material and, thus, that welcoming a discussion
will provide students with meaningful learning. This sentiment was stated almost two months later when she was asked to write about whether discussion is worth the trouble, to which she responded that “Discussion provides students with an opportunity to cultivate the skills needed to formulate opinions and defend or refute various positions” (In-Class, Written Reflection, October 14, 2014). Again, this comment demonstrates Fran’s understanding of how knowledge can and should be constructed by students (“formulate opinions”) and the necessity of being able to engage in discourse and defend such beliefs when necessary. The connections Fran made between principles of knowledge construction and the use of discussion demonstrate a strong conceptualization of discussion as a pedagogical strategy for achieving many of the oft-referenced aims of a democratic education. It should be noted here that like the majority of other participants, Fran may not have made a strong connection specifically between principles of social justice (within democratic education) and that of discussion in the social studies classroom. She did, however, get to the point where discussion was being linked to principles of knowledge construction, abilities to dialogue and defend, and key areas in citizenship education.

Fran’s teaching.

Perhaps more so than the other five participants of the current study, Fran’s teaching appeared to be more influenced by forces outside of her teacher education program. This is not to say that Fran did not make numerous references to the ideas she had been introduced to within her coursework and previous field placements, it simply means that Fran’s personal experiences played more of a factor in her development as a preservice teacher than with the other five participants.
For instance, being raised by a father who was a social studies teacher and a mother who majored in history in college, Fran’s upbringing in a household that emphasized the practical component to teaching as well as the content-driven component often underlined her philosophies toward education. Often times she referred to her parent’s as being critical to her decision to be a teacher as well as the teacher she wanted to become (constantly noting that she was a “history buff” who enjoyed reading about various areas of the history).

Beyond this, however, Fran’s cooperating teacher also appeared to play a large role in developing her as a future educator. Her cooperating teacher – an effective teacher in his own right – served as both a tenured social studies teacher and the head coach of several sports teams at the high school where he worked. He had a strong passion for the content he was teaching and Fran often described him as a “history-buff”. Fran also noted early in the semester that her CT was “really cooperating and flexible…[and] willing to let me do as much or as little as I want” (In-Class Written Reflection, September 16, 2014). In this sense, Fran did not appear to have many issues of finding her own space in her placement, as her cooperating teacher appeared enthusiastic to let Fran experiment in how she approached teaching.

Because of his senior status as a social studies teacher, Fran’s cooperating teacher was able to develop a course (Military History) and was allowed to teach it in whatever way he felt would be most useful to his students. There were no curriculum or formal tests that went along with the course and, therefore, Fran’s
cooperating teacher was able to construct the classroom with little oversight. Fran noted that her cooperating teacher “uses the flexibility to focus on what the students want to learn about and has more freedom to deviate from his lecture based off of the discussion that develops within the class” (In-Class Written Comment, September 16, 2014). Fran frequently described how she sought a classroom with similar parameters. In other words, Fran wanted the ability that her cooperating teacher had to tailor her lessons and the content being taught to her students (as opposed to a state or school wide curriculum). Since the Military History course required neither formal standards nor oversight from administrators, Fran was provided with the opportunity to teach this course without having to consider formal standards or end-of-course exams. Throughout the semester, I observed Fran teach the Military History course twice and interviewed her shortly after both observations.

On both occasions, Fran emphasized the content within her lessons through the use of traditional methods of teaching (e.g., lecture, PowerPoint). Though it is both difficult to assess and out of the scope of this study as to why she used such methods, Fran’s use of lecture almost directly contrasted her vision of lecture as a pedagogical approach. Earlier in the semester when asked what forms of pedagogy she intended on using to teach:

…When I do lecture, it won’t be like a sit and give kind of thing. It’ll be a lecture that’s open to discussion. Cause the best lecturers I’ve seen in college are the ones who go in and you lecture everyday and … but they are very open to you interrupting or asking questions. (Initial Interview, August 20, 2014)
Fran’s use of lecture was likely not harmful to the students, nor can it be said to be completely reflective of the teacher she may become upon entering into the field of education as in-service teacher. However, it merits attention given her strong grasp on broad theories of democratic education as put forth in a number of her data sources. For someone who spoke so highly of allowing lectures to be discussion-based, it was intriguing to see a more teacher-centered approach being implemented throughout each observation.

There certainly were examples of a more progressive form of pedagogy being incorporated into the classroom while Fran was teaching. For instance, when being observed teaching for the first time, Fran provided students, within an Advance Placement United States History course, with a copy of a secession declaration from the South to the North prior to the Civil War. After providing students with this document, she posed the question of what reasons students could find for the Confederacy’s secession from the Union during the Antebellum Era. Several students willingly volunteered to summarize their favorite components of the document and Fran worked to facilitate a brief overview of each comment mentioned by the students. In this sense, Fran sought to provide her students with a classroom environment reflective of a more student-centered classroom.

**Summary of Fran.**

Fran’s narrative was heavily influenced by a number of forces in her life. Collectively, her veteran teacher father, content-driven cooperating teacher, democratic education oriented teacher education program, and her own interest in
social studies education influenced who she was (and who she will become) as an in-service teacher. And at the end of the day, Fran seemed to still be working to create her own identity as a teacher by combining all of these influences into her rational for teaching and methods for achieving such objectives.

Specific to the current research, however, Fran had a strong (and certainly developing) understanding on many components of democratic education as evidenced by her philosophy of education and responses to a variety of interview questions. Her words – though often appearing to reflect the same words and phrases promoted by the program – always contained a level of substance that went beyond simply creating “citizens for a democratic society.” Rather, Fran’s visions of education carried strong undertones of using discussion to incorporate varying perspectives into the classroom through a number of different means. And, in some cases, demonstrated an understanding of the connection between a constructivist approach to teaching and the use of discussion for students to build their own understanding of the content being presented.

Erin.

At the time of the present study, Erin was 21 years old and a senior in college majoring in social studies education. Much like Sydney, Erin originally intended on teaching elementary school. However, after an early field placement in a middle grades class, she changed her major to secondary education and chose the social studies as the field she intended on teaching. Erin, much like Sydney, Fran, and Adriana had taken two
courses with me (orientation to education and junior-level social studies methods) during
her first and third year, respectively.

*Erin’s conceptions of democratic education.*

Much like the other participants of the present study, Erin’s vision of education
was one that was often vague and focused on principles of citizenship as opposed to
social justice and equality (a harmful dichotomy, but one that seems pertinent to the
current study). For instance, when asked to describe the aims of education at the
beginning of the fall semester of 2014, Erin claimed:

To teach children so that they are prepared for future education but also real
life and real world experiences whether that’s a job or I guess everything is a
job in a way, but not necessarily, even those that won’t go into higher
education but preparing them to be able to function in society. (Initial
Interview, August 24, 2014)

In other words, Erin viewed the purposes of education as not simply about teaching
content, but as a way to prepare students to function in society through their ideal role
whether this is a student in college or a person who joins the workforce directly after
leaving high school. Erin was asked to write a purpose for education shortly after the
interview to which she responded, “To prepare students to live, work, and function within
a changing global society” (Post Initial Interview Questionnaire, August 24, 2014). Such
a vision is reflective of Erin’s belief that education’s primary purpose is to create citizens
who abide by the rules of law that are already in place (in a sense, promoting obedience
over reform-oriented thinking). Though this is not to say that Erin did not value making
changes to a broken and often intolerant society, it does demonstrate that she placed such
an ideal lower on her priorities than developing citizens who were capable of entering
into society as a “good” citizens in a traditional sense (e.g., voting, following the news,
being tolerant of others, petitioning). Such an vision of an effective citizen is reflective of
Nie, Junn and Stehlik (1996) exploration into the difference between political
engagement and democratic enlightenment. In the former, citizens have knowledge of
leaders and political facts, are politically attentive, participate in difficult political
activities, and vote. In order for Erin’s description of an effective citizen to become
“enlightened” the democratic process, Nie et al. would suggest they need to develop a
knowledge of principles of democracy and tolerance to others.

Further, when asked to describe her vision of democratic education in the initial
interview, Erin claimed “I guess education for all. Um, equal education for all although I
don’t think that happens but I guess that’s the idea” (August 24, 2014). This was the first
– and one of few – references made to principles of inequality and inequity made by Erin
throughout the data collection phase of the study. And when pressed about this comment
directly after it being said, Erin took it in a direction that was not expected by saying:

So ideally every student in the united states would receive the same
education, well, I guess depending on obviously a special needs student
won’t receive what an 8th grade honors student might, but everyone has the
same opportunities in education but I don’t think that actually happens but I
guess that’s the idea… the ideally that’s what education would be like in the
United States. (Initial Interview, August 21st 2014)
In other words, much of the present research is grounded in notions of social justice and inequities and inequalities stemming from the school system in the United States of America in regards to race, gender, religion, and sexual orientation. Erin’s vision of “democratic education”, however, is grounded in equal education for all, with a sole reference to students who are classified as learning disabled. Though Erin’s way of thinking holds value, it falls short of Banks’s (2001) popular notion of “citizenship education be[ing] transformed in this new century because of the large influx of immigrants who are now settling in nations throughout the world, because of the continuing institutional racist and discrimination throughout the world” (p. 6). To better align with Bank’s notions, Erin would need to think beyond participatory citizenship to a more reform-oriented perspective grounded in race, gender, culture, and religion and, thus, justice-oriented pedagogy focused on equitable and equal education.

Erin’s vision of discussion.

As previously discussed, Erin often took a very practical approach to teaching, focusing heavily on classroom management and feasibility (a manner in which many preservice teachers understandably approach their field placements) and this approach was one that was seen within her understandings of discussion in the social studies classroom. For instance, when asked during the pilot study that took place in her Junior-Level Social Studies Methods course to describe her views toward discussion, Erin replied by stating:
I think it’s a good thing. I remember doing it in my classes growing up and that was really good. Cause I was – I found myself much more willing to listen to other peers than I was to my teacher. Um, but at the same time I just don’t know how standards affect that so like do you really have time to discuss or are you just trying to get through the standards to prepare your students. I think they’re all good ideas in theory, I just don’t how much you can actually use them in the classroom cause you are being held to very specific rules. (Junior-Level Social Studies Methods Interview, September 25, 2013)

Similar to Kathleen, Erin describes here her own experiences learning through discussion as she a k12 student. Part of this explanation relies on her willingness to listen to her peers as opposed to a teacher. However, she also mirrored the comments of many of the other participants who wondered about how to include a discussion in an already crowded curriculum where accountability is on every educator’s mind. When asked over a year after this comment to respond to the question of “What’s the use of discussion?” as a reflection prompt for class, Erin started her response by claiming the following:

Discussion can be hard to incorporate into the classroom. Students often get off topic, and sometimes the teacher does too. For example, last week in the class I observe, the class discussed government spending. Within a matter of minutes, the teacher and the class got so off topic that it was near impossible to gain back control in focusing the lesson. As a result, the class only did half of what was intended for that day. Also, it seems that in discussions the same
students end up talking and many do not participate through listening either.

(In-Class Reflection, October 14, 2014)

Again, Erin demonstrated a pattern of approaching teaching in the most practical manner possible, worrying more about having “control” of the classroom than providing students with autonomy. This perspective is almost in direct contrast with Freiré’s (1973) ideal of providing students with the opportunity to construct their own knowledge on open-ended subject matter. This is not to say, however, that Erin was not cognizant of the benefits of discussion as a pedagogical strategy. Rather, her understanding aligned well with the Hess (2004) reading assigned for her course. For instance, after writing the above statement, Erin continued by saying:

I do think that discussion can be beneficial in the classroom, if conducted properly. Hess argues that discussions must involve sharing, analyzing, and critiquing multiple perspectives. I agree with Hess on this, and I think that if teachers used this as a guide in forming them, discussions have the potential to go well and benefit the class. Discussion can help students learn to facilitate ideas and to think critically about their own ideas as well as opinions of others. If done correctly, it can help students learn how to participate in discussions in future learning experiences as well as future life experiences. (In-Class Reflection, October 14, 2014)

Erin’s conceptions of discussion – which she defined as a “conversation for students to argue their perspectives while listening to how others interpret something” – appears grounded in many of the principles she was introduced to
within her coursework (Post Initial Interview Written Reflection, fall 2014). Despite this essential understanding of discussion, however, Erin once again demonstrated evidence that her understanding of how discussion can improve student learning is placed behind her concern for maintaining a practical learning environment. Shortly after seeing the best practices video for the first time, Erin was asked in class if she would try to use a method such as discussion (or debate) in her own classroom. This was the only time Erin was spoke during this class conversation and she claimed:

I hadn’t seen that yet in my classes. One of my classes doesn’t say a word. I don’t know if I’ll do it in my class. It depends on my students and also if they can control themselves enough to do it. Um yeah just depends on the situation. So I don’t want to say I’ll do it, but ideally I’ll do it. (Best Practices Video Conversation, September 9, 2014).

Again, Erin here is demonstrating a hesitancy to use discussion based on her own observations in the classroom. To her, repeatedly seeing a [single] class full of students who are not engaged is enough to fear trying discussion in her own classroom, with her own students. Erin, therefore, may have understood the justification for using discussion, but like Adriana, she struggled to bridge the gap between theory and practice and frequently say discussion occurring in the “ideal” classroom (as opposed to the “typical” classroom). During her conclusion interview, Erin was shown the same video again and asked which forms of instruction seen in the video she would model in her own classroom. Erin simply noted “none”. Though she did not expand upon this response,
Erin did emphasize earlier in the reflection protocol in the interview that the teacher had several shortcomings in her discussion where certain students were misbehaving and there existed several students who monopolized the conversation. Erin specifically claimed that “it’s the same students talking and it’s obvious that not everyone is paying attention” (Discussion on Second Viewing of Best Practices Video, December 10, 2014). Such an observation reiterates Erin’s struggle with maintaining control of her students and providing them with the standard-based content.

*Erin’s teaching.*

Early in the semester, Erin made it clear that her and her cooperating teacher often had different visions of how a classroom should be managed. Though she noted that she always felt supported and saw much value in her cooperating teacher’s methods for educating, she did not necessarily want to emulate his teaching practices upon entering into the classroom. This was demonstrated on a number of occasions, however, an email from Erin the night before her first observation simply read, “Just to warn you, this isn't necessarily how I would conduct my classroom, but this is all I can do” (email correspondence, October 8, 2014). Though it is difficult to fully understand what Erin is referring to, Erin’s lesson the previous day consisted entirely of a PowerPoint provided to her by her cooperating teacher and on several occasions she noted her displeasure in the lack of autonomy she had while teaching. Moreover, Erin appeared to struggle blending her university teachings into her classroom experiences due in large part to the practices of her cooperating teaching which she believed were too teacher-centered. Though outside the scope of the current study, there existed a sense of socialization occurring in
which Erin was being introduced to the teaching profession through a veteran teacher’s more traditional methods and philosophies. Consistently seeing these approaches in action may have accounted for Erin’s additional emphasis on using PowerPoint for giving notes and lectures to ensure student understanding and her control of the classroom.

Again it bears noting that Erin did see her cooperating teacher as effective in his own right, but she often felt limited in the ways she could teach in her class. The students of the course had grown accustomed to the pedagogical practices of her cooperating teacher and she even noted that some had gotten visibly upset when she tried to do something unique toward the end of the semester. This is evidenced by an isolated incident during the first observation of Erin in which her cooperating teacher – who had allowed Erin to manage the class on her own – spoke up from his desk to simply state to students, “that’s on the test, by the way, just saying…” (October 8, 2014). Though certainly nothing wrong with acknowledging the importance of learning material for an exam, such a moment reflects the emphasis placed on standardized and standard-based testing placed upon students as well as the environment in which Erin completed her field experience.

The first field observation of Erin occurred on October 8, 2014 and involved her taking over her cooperating teachers’ class for 15 minutes to explain the topic of government agencies and spending to a senior level economics class. Erin described the classroom environment in advance as often consisting of lecture and rarely going outside the traditional format of teaching and learning. Her students, Erin noted, were used to the idea of taking notes (especially in that course) and they knew how to survive the class.
without putting too much effort or thought into their work. Erin’s field placement and her coinciding interviews and classwork reflected this experience in terms of the practicality of using discussion. In this sense, Erin frequently alluded to the importance of using discussion (even if at a relatively surface-level), but did so in a way that was concerned with teaching content and standards above engaging students in meaningful learning and constructive discussions.

Throughout this first observation, Erin was expected to teach her students about a variety of government agencies and components. Her lesson began – as requested by her cooperating teacher – by having students read out of the textbook to gain a familiarity with the content. This occurred for approximately five minutes, at which point Erin began to lecture from the PowerPoint notes that she had been provided ahead of class. Erin’s teaching, therefore, consisted of teaching 12 students for 15 minutes, five of which involved individually reading from a textbook and the remaining 10 minutes involved Erin lecturing the content. It should be noted, however, that Erin did try to engage her students in a conversation regarding government agencies. For instance, Erin at one point asked her students what government agencies should receive high levels of funding. When she received no formal response, Erin made her question even broader and asked her students to name a couple of government agencies. One student volunteered “NASA” and then Erin affirmed this response and returned to her provided slides. Though certainly an isolated incident, this moment effectively reflects the type of placement in which Erin was working in throughout the course of the semester and it seems to parallel the majority of what was observed during Erin’s three separate observations.
Similarly, on that same day, the PowerPoint that was provided to Erin actually had “discussion questions” placed into the presentation by textbook company, which produced the slides. Despite these being present throughout the presentation, neither Erin nor her cooperating teacher used these to engage students in a conversation, instead opting to skip over these slides and focus on more content-based lecture. When asked about these questions after her first observation, Erin noted that she “actually likes them” but chooses not to use them because her CT only makes students write the questions down (without answering them) and she did not want to stray too far from the way he taught. Paired with her post-observation interview remark that “more discussion would have been ideal”, there existed a good deal of evidence that Erin felt limited in what she could do within the parameters of her placement.

Upon being observed for a second time – on October 22, 2014 – Erin was expected by her cooperating teacher to teach 15 students about the responsibilities and privileges of being the president of the United States. The lesson began with Erin putting students in into groups of three and assigning them a section in the textbook to summarize. After working together to do this for approximately ten minutes, each group was asked to stand at the front of the room and present their summaries. In other words, rather than having students read the chapter individually (as she had during her first lesson), Erin tried out a more collaborative effort that involved students reading, summarizing, and presenting their interpretations of the textbook.

Having students review and present the content to one another took approximately 15 minutes and was followed by Erin asking students several open-ended discussion
questions on the content in another attempt to engage students in some form of group-talk. For instance, Erin asked the class about the president’s salary (a topic summarized by one of the groups): do you think 400,000” is enough money for a president? Do you think that’s too much? Or too little?” (Erin, Teaching Comment, October 22, 2014). This question received a couple of small comments directed at Erin, but she chose to move quickly to another question about how much presidents are paid once they are no longer in office. Again, students of the class made a small number of comments, but none of which Erin either followed-up on or used to promote more discussion.

The most interesting anecdote to come out of Erin’s observations involved a situation that occurred on October 29th 2014, her third and final formal observation. On that particular day Erin was scheduled to teach the entire 90-minute class as her cooperating teacher was absent that day and felt that Erin would serve as the most competent teacher for the class. Erin’s cooperating teacher left her with a ninety-minute lesson plan and asked for her to follow it and, if necessary, show a 19-minute segment from NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams to fill up the entire class.

For whatever reason, Erin completed the entire lesson (including watching the news program) with 40 minutes remaining in the class. Recognizing that she had to fill up the remaining time, she approached me – who was conducting my observation at the time – and asked for suggestions on what she could do for the remainder of the class. Though my goal was to be as objective as possible, I did want to assist Erin by providing her with some potential direction and I felt that one way to do this would be to get the students
talking about the potential Ebola outbreak that had been discussed by Brian Williams on his Nightly News program.

Once Erin agreed to this idea, we collaborated to come up with a scenario that could hopefully get her students conversing on issue of Ebola. We informally came up with several prompt questions to ask the students (who were in groups of three). Such questions included – though were not limited to – If you were the governor of New Jersey, would you quarantine individuals who were showing symptoms of Ebola and, if so, to what extent? We asked students to describe where they would quarantine patients (e.g., in their homes or hospital). And, finally, we asked students if they would allow for travel outside of the United States if you were in a position of power during the Ebola scare of 2014?

Such questions were neither grounded in research nor meant to tie into content-based standards. Rather, they were thrown together at the last minute to prevent having a class of 20 high school students sitting idly for 40 minutes. Despite this, however, Erin appeared more comfortable during this activity and more excited about teaching. Rather than appearing somewhat complacent with her use of her cooperating teacher’s lectures or her own disinterest in the material, Erin appeared to be enjoying her teaching and she carried out the dialogue for well over thirty minutes; all of which involved lively discourse and student engagement.

Afterward, Erin was asked how the lesson went. Referring to the forty-minute Ebola-based activity, she claimed:
I think that the activity that we did at the end was really good and really got them thinking… but not only thinking, but also sharing with the class and really having to argue and justify their thoughts which I think was good for them cause they really aren’t use to having do that on a usual day. (Post Observation Interview, November 24, 2014)

This was a critical moment both in the present study as well as Erin’s experience within her teacher education program. Not only did Erin reflect on the positive impact of using discussion, she also identified what she was doing as discussion and recognized that most of the students were more engaged than on a typical day in which they are presented lecture slides and asked to write down notes and occasionally do a worksheet in groups. More specifically, Erin noted:

That sparked a lot of discussion … and it was students I had never heard speak up before… and never heard at all… they were offering their opinion. And a lot were justifying their opinion as well…. So not just showing that they had an opinion, but also that they could back it up with support. (Post Observation Interview, November 24, 2014)

Here Erin was able to associate the use of a “good” discussion with the incorporation of evidence-based logic and various perspectives. In other words, she focused on how the discussion was effective because it involved a variety of students sharing their well thought out and supported opinions instead of simply repeating popular opinions. Whether or not this happened falls outside of the scope of this section. But it does reflect on the ability of Erin to define discussion as a
means for teaching students to support their own arguments and listen to the perspectives of other participants in a discussion.

*Emphasis on feasibility.*

Perhaps more so than the other participants, Erin made very clear her fear of “losing control” of her class through the incorporation of various student-centered theories and methods discussed within her teacher education courses (e.g. discussion, simulations, debates). Such a concern, though not unique to Erin, was one that frequently appeared in her data; regardless of it came from an observation, written response to a classroom prompt, or a formal interview throughout the semester.

For instance, when asked to provide a written reflection assessing the first third of her senior level social studies methods course on September 30, 2014, Erin wrote the following:

I still do not understand how to implement different teaching practices in a “realistic” classroom setting. Sometimes I feel like what I read about is idealistic settings. They do not mention school requirements, state requirements, etc. I think it would be beneficial to understand certain strategies on or steps for how to do this, if possible. (In Class Reflection Prompt, September 30, 2014)

This comment is reflective of Erin’s concerns regarding the practice of teaching. While she never once referred to the theories she had been introduced to in her Principles of American Education, Junior Level Social Studies, and Senior Level
Social Studies Courses as being removed from teaching, she consistently stressed a disconnect between these theories and what she saw and experienced in her field experience, heard from her cooperating teacher(s), and expected from her career as an in-service teacher. Regardless of the pedagogical strategy presented or the theory introduced to her within her program, Erin often appeared to place it in a context of the types of classrooms she witnessed growing up or saw while in one of her many field placements, thus mirroring the apprenticeship of observation as put forth Lortie (1975) and reinforced by Zeichner (2010). It is feasible to imagine, therefore, that Erin’s primary way of assessing “good” pedagogy was first done through an analysis of how the approach appeared to work within her experiences in the classroom. This was seen in the ways in which she approached teaching in that she often sought to maintain control by using teacher-centered approaches instead of giving up this control and placing the onus of learning on the students of her class.

**Summary of Erin.**

Erin was an intriguing participant within the present research, as she continuously noted her hesitancy to incorporate the theories she learned in her own coursework into her practice as a teacher. This is in no way to say that she did not accept them or that she did not agree with them; rather, Erin took a more practical approach toward her teaching and often emphasized the feasibility over the justification. A frequent theme to emerge from Erin’s data was that she wanted to create an environment in her classroom where she could “control” her students instead of giving up power. Though she saw the merit and value of generating a
student-centered environment, she feared that giving up her own power might jeopardize her ability to maintain a certain level of control of her students.

Despite this approach, however, Erin’s most critical piece of data came in the form of her using discussion as a means for getting students to engage with one another over an issue that was topical and involved the exchanging of various perspectives (an ideal often advocated for throughout her coursework). In other words, on the day in which Erin used a collaborative approach to engage students in a conversation around fears of Ebola, her students were more engaged and Erin felt more comfortable and confident in front of the classroom.

Michael.

Early in Michael’s high school career he had made the decision that teaching the social studies was a career he wanted to pursue. Like many, Michael had experienced a history teacher who had encouraged critical thinking and project-based learning and wanted to provide a similarly engaging history experience to a younger generation of secondary students through his own teaching. However, it was not until Michael entered into his teacher education program at the large southeastern university in which the current study took place that he “fell in love with the teaching part” (Initial Interview, August 19, 2014). In this sense, Michael’s original interest in teaching was focused on content and engaging students in historical inquiry based on his own personal passion for history driven by a former teacher. Though as he progressed through his teacher education program, he developed a similar interest and understanding of the pedagogical component of being an effective history teacher. Because of this, Michael presented an
interesting component to the current study in that he was dually interested in both the content and the teaching (and, though never clearly stated, the pedagogical content knowledge of effective teaching).

**Michael’s conceptions of democratic education.**

In regards to the current study, Michael made an interesting comment in his initial interview that demonstrated an excelled understanding of the broad purposes of education (as described at the beginning of chapter two of the present study). When asked about the purposes of education, Michael immediately responded by noting how the United States’ School System has the potential to expose students to new ideas that they otherwise may have been sheltered from within their homes. More specifically, Michael noted:

[I] think the purpose of the school system is to take uh young kids who have could…. Perhaps come from a sheltered environment at home and expose them to other people. To expose them to other people who may not think the way they do, expose them how to think for themselves and create a society that um, isn’t necessarily uh,… it can work together and it can realize can work together and aren’t the same as they are. (Initial Interview, August 19, 2014)

Over a year prior to this comment, Michael alluded to the fact that “the classroom is the first place most students find to build a platform to share their beliefs and interact with people who may look different and who may not agree with them” (Michael, Teaching Philosophy, Fall 2013). Citing the work of Hess and Gutmann, Michael continued by noting:
In a classroom of white and black kids, liberal and conservative kids, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, all may be interacting for the first time. Typically in early childhood, friends or family members that fully agree with their opinions surround children. Whether it was the goal of the institutions or not is irrelevant, a sheltered environment takes shape, and the classroom is more representative of the society as a whole. (Michael, Teaching Philosophy, Fall 2013)

Michael, therefore, did see the value in the diversity present in the classroom and, in a sense, saw it as a way to promote a more constructivist environment where students used the diversity in the classroom to promote critical thinking. The extent to which Michael alluded to (or understood) ideas of indoctrination is unclear, but his comments appear to reflect that of an individual who is cognizant of the role of schools in preventing a new generation of citizens whose views exclusively align with those the individuals who raised them.

Similarly, Michael also used this element of multiculturalism to respond to a question early in the semester regarding the purposes of the social studies. When asked to write about this question, Michael stated that the main purpose of the social studies is to “push individuals to see the world through another person’s eyes. That can mean through looking back through history, or relating to people today that have a different color of skin.” (Written Reflection, August 26, 2014). Here, Michael emphasizes the need for the social studies classroom to have students empathize both with one another and individuals taught in the curriculum and in current issues and events. This is important as
it demonstrates Michael’s focus on relevant and meaningful learning in the social studies classroom. Expanding upon this idea, Michael was asked to do a “free write” on the first day of his senior-level social studies methods course. The question he was asked to answer was why the social studies is different than other subjects. Michael responded by nothing

Other subjects like science and mathematics are focused on fact, but a social studies class can go an entire year without solving anything. You can solve 100 math problems in a day, but what about racism? There are many social and economic problems that exist in the world that often get ignored, but the social studies classroom offers a place for individual students to think and discuss the issues. Social studies teachers should want to show people how they fit in to [sic] society, hopefully improving that society in the long run.

(Written Response Question, August 26, 2014)

This quote demonstrates Michael’s understanding on how the social studies offers opportunities for students to discuss critical issues such as inequalities and inequities regarding race. Similarly, Michael’s emphasis on “improving society in the long run” reflects where Habermas noted the public sphere’s necessity of fixing a “broken society”. This quote also demonstrates Michael’s understanding of the open-ended nature of many topics in the social studies and how they can ultimately lead to an improved citizenry; thus reflecting a rudimentary understanding of a constructivist approach within the classroom.
Much like his emphasis on diversity, Michael took a different approach than the other participants when reflecting upon the aims of social studies education in his interview. While the other participants primarily took an history-centric approach, Michael – who had a history emphasis himself – noted:

… So if you look at geography, how [people] impact land. If you look at history...

How a decision that was made 300 years ago is still having some influence over what I was doing when I woke up this morning or if you look at government how a policy that is in Washington is going to - maybe three years from now – trickle down and have some impact on me. (Initial Interview, August 19, 2014)

Within this quote, Michael foundationally demonstrates how each discipline of the social studies works together to provide students with a working understanding of how the world came to be and how it currently functions. Interestingly, however, Michael contrasted this multi-faceted vision of the social studies within his teaching philosophy where he only wrote about history. This was not surprising, as Michael consistently maintained his interest in specifically teaching in the histories.

*Michael's vision of discussion.*

Throughout data collection, Michael tended to take a relatively practical approach when considering the art of teaching. For instance, many of his comments questioned the potential of bringing in ideal images of pedagogy. While discussing issues with constructivist teaching in class, for example, Michael volunteered the idea that he worried about “giving up control” in his classroom (In-Class Comment, September 9, 2014). In his initial interview in the fall of 2014, Michael was asked about how a teacher could
achieve the oft-referenced aims of a democratic education. His response – specifically focusing on the final line – is certainly telling in regards to his vision of teaching:

You have to have a classroom environment that is uh is geared toward discussion, I think, because – going back to making kids open to other people’s ideas, if I get up there and just tell people what I think all of the time, all they are going to hear is my viewpoint, and they are going to lose the voices of the other people in the class. So creating a classroom that – maybe if you have a shy girl, she may come in early and put her head down and never wants to talk – and she feels comfortable talking, she feels comfortable sharing what she thinks, that’s the type of classroom I want. It’s kind of intimidating when you think about how in the world am I going to create that? (Initial Interview, August 19, 2014; Emphasis added).

In this quote, Michael mirrors many of the other participants in the study in that he sees the value of discussion, but also questions its practicality in the social studies classroom. This way of thinking is not unique to Michael and the other participants. Kaufman and Moss (2008) note “preservice teachers’ fears about classrooms run amok often lead them to view control of students as a primary goal and outcome” (p. 132). Much like Kathleen, Michael sees the diversity in the classroom as a challenge, as opposed to a privilege. The different levels of abilities and experiences of the students are described problematic from Michael’s perspective. However, this is paired with the optimistic vision of how discussion can help students construct their own opinion that may differ from that of the teacher (further emphasizing his fear of indoctrinating students with his own beliefs).
In a similar manner, Michael took an equally practical approach upon observing the best practices video for the first time. During the class discussion that occurred after it was viewed Michael noted that the he “like[d] class-wide discussion – promoting critical thinking, but it lasted too long” (In-Class Comment, October 14, 2014). Michael – for whatever reason – took issue with the length of the activity occurring in the video, which – it should be noted – was five minutes of a ten-minute video.

Though Michael expressed his thoughts on using discussion throughout data collection, one of the more interesting pieces of data came from within his initial teaching philosophy, Michael quoted Hess (2010) by noting:

Schools’ greater capacity is embodied in the fact that they contain more diversity that one would expect to find in a family, church, synagogue, mosque or club. [sic]. This diversity of views (and, by extension, diversity about which issues matter the most) makes classrooms powerful places to promote ‘rational deliberations of competing conceptions of the good life and the good society. (Taken from Initial Teaching Philosophy, submitted September 9, 2014).

Michael used this quote as a way to build the argument for exposing students to new ideas and beliefs; especially those that they may have been “sheltered from” throughout their upbringing. And, occasionally, he did this by noting the importance of discussion. For example, following his reference of Hess and the school’s capacity to introduce students to the viewpoints of others, Michael noted that:

As a social studies teacher, it is my job to help students learn to express their opinions through discussions and feel comfortable doing it. The class should be
structured so that it is primarily discussion-based. That puts more responsibility on both the students who must actively take part in the classes and me as a teacher being prepared to facilitate these discussions. (Initial teaching philosophy, submitted September 9, 2014)

Michael, here, describes his interest in creating a student-centered class where the onus of learning and collaborating is placed upon the students, thus leaving the teacher to serve primarily as a facilitator. Even more telling, Michael was asked by the assistant professor during the course to reflect on Hess’s piece detailing the merits of using discussion in the classroom. When asked the question of whether discussion was worth it, Michael suggested that:

Discussion is the only place in a social studies classroom where people can effectively express their views towards an issue. If we are not teaching social studies as interpretations of the past, people, how to use money, etc. we are doing students a disservice by not allowing them to share their view on topics. Some subjects are cut and dry where teachers can ask simple questions and get feedback from their students where the teachers can assess if learning is or is not taking place. Social Studies classrooms are not that simple, and the only way to learn is to open up the floor for everyone to express their views towards society. It does not make life easy on the teacher, but it is worth the effort. (Michael, October 14, 2014, in-class reading reflection)

Again, this quote demonstrates Michael’s emphasis both on the difficulty of incorporating an effective discussion into the classroom as well as the need to do so.
Michael, for that matter, consistently alluded to the fact that teachers need to serve as facilitators, not as the sole purveyors of knowledge in a classroom. Both in his original teaching philosophy and his initial interview, Michael voiced the need to expose students whose parents may have provided them only one perspective - or one narrative – with an outlet for discovering the beliefs and experiences of others. And though only sometimes these were related to acts of discussion, they certainly demonstrated the connection Michael was beginning to make between principles of democratic education (in regards to multiculturalism) and the social studies as a content-area.

Michael began to make connections between discussion and the incorporation of various perspectives when he was asked to assess the teaching in the best practices video. Though he failed to explicitly mention providing voices to historically marginalized voices, he did note that the teacher in the video was effective in that she “was focused at discussion and allowing everyone’s voice to be heard…Turning into talking points and getting voice heard.” (Reflection Protocol, September 9, 2014). Michael appeared to recognize that the teaching in the video did attempt to incorporate the voices of each individual student and, in this sense, incorporate the perspectives of many students in the class. This idea appears to have been instilled in Michael early in his teacher career, as was demonstrated in data dating back as early as the fall of 2013 (the beginning of the present study) when Michael was asked about the role of discussion in the social studies class. Without hesitating, Michael noted it as being “primary”, stating that, “if the class isn’t discussion-based, then the students truly aren’t learning anything from it. And you
want them to learn from each other’s ideas and not strictly from the teacher’s point of view.” (Pilot Study Data, Initial Interview, September 24, 2013).

This is even more evidenced in Michael’s initial lesson plan submitted in the fall of 2013 within his junior-level social studies methods course (junior level social studies methods). Within this plan, his introductory activity was one borrowed regarding the conceptions students have toward the Ku Klux Klan. In short, Michael intended on showing his students the key principles underlying the KKK’s beliefs and following this with a ten minute discussion on what surprised students and how these ideals may have reflected or contrasted their own beliefs. Again, perhaps this lesson is not reflective of the conceptual framework developed by the teacher education program he was part of, but it did demonstrate Michael’s interest in using a seemingly controversial topic to engage students in a collaborative discussion on misconceptions and beliefs. Beyond Michael, this theme of figuring out classroom management prior to learning was seen in several other participants as well (e.g., Erin and Kathleen each made multiple mentions of fears of management).

Another example of Michael’s acknowledgement of the necessity for discussion in the social studies classroom came in the form of a written reflection he submitted in his junior level social studies methods class in the fall of 2013. Within this course, Michael was required to teach three “mini-lessons” in his field placements. The purpose of this assignment was to have students of the course get up in front of a group of secondary students for approximately 10 minutes simply to experience teaching as a third year preservice teacher. Upon submitting a written reflection for his first time teaching,
Michael evidently was required to use a previously used PowerPoint to provide lecture notes to a ninth grade geography class. Though Michael noted that he was limited in what he was able to do, he did claim that “If [he] had to teach the lesson again, [he] would likely attempt a discussion-based approach” (Written Reflection on Field Placement, October 9, 2013). This was an important comment for Michael to have said given that he referred to his lesson as containing mostly “passive learning” from students due to the classroom teachers’ traditional, lecture-style approach to teaching. Michael – in his first year of the social studies program – was already noting how discussion would have made the students of the class more actively engaged in the content.

A final example of Michael’s interest in using discussion came from his final lesson plan that he submitted for his senior-level methods course in the fall of 2014. This lesson plan, which he constructed with a partner (the partner was not a participant in the study, but did agreed to have her work used in the study) began and ended with a discussion. More specifically, the lesson, which was grounded in the Great Migration, was expected to begin with a discussion about why people move before a lecture and reading activity on the reasons why the Great Migration occurred in the United States in the twentieth century. At the end of the lesson, students would have another discussion on “push factors of states such as South Carolina and Alabama, and pull factors of states such as New York and California” (Lesson Plan, Senior Level Social Studies Methods, Fall 2014). The idea appears to be that the students would start by doing an introduction as a collective group, then transition into individual work, and then end by once again working as a group to discuss the individual work that had been completed on the Great
Migration. From this, it was evident that he understood the need to use discussion as a way to actively engage students and incorporate various perspectives into work with no concrete answer.

**Michael’s teaching.**

Despite his vision of teaching in a democratic classroom grounded in discussion and controversial issues, Michael rarely incorporated either collaboration or critical topics into his pedagogy. On three separate observations during the fall 2014, Michael was observed facilitating his lessons mostly through teacher-centered approaches (primarily lecture). For instance, during his first observation (September 22, 2014) Michael taught about the “antics” of John Brown in regards to the bloody massacre that occurred in Kansas during the Antebellum Era. Michael did try to engage his students in the content by incorporating topics relevant to their lives (e.g., college sports mascots within the topic of the Kansas-Nebraska Act). Despite his best efforts, however, Michael acknowledged that this first observation fell short of his own vision of “good” teaching. Michael noted after the observation that “it was straight lecture based off of the slides that …um… my CT gave me to present” (Post Observation Interview, September 24, 2014). In this same interview, Michael stated that a few students participated, but that most of them were disengaged with both the content and his style of teaching.

On October 13, 2014, Michael was observed teaching for a second time and requested to teach for the entire 90-minute class. According to Michael, he was emailed a 60-slide PowerPoint the day before he taught and was told he could “tweak it, just not too much”. Though this certainly impacted what he was expected to teach and how he was
required to do so, he worked within these parameters to experiment with a variety of approaches. And despite creating a teacher-centered environment for over 80 minutes of the 90-minute lesson, there were instances where Michael incorporated his vision of “discussion” into the his teaching. For instance, Michael asked the students to analyze a popular Albert Einstein quote; “I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones” at the beginning of class. When asked why he selected this quote, Michael claimed that it was his decision to integrate Einstein’s remark and that he felt it served as an effective way to teach students about modern warfare (and how we would “just obliterate ourselves” due to increased technology). Though only a few students volunteered to analyze Einstein’s quote, this moment does demonstrate an attempt by Michael to engage students by going beyond the standard-based content. Further, this anecdote lends itself to the question of the extent to which these opportunities would have been more prevalent and more successful had he not been given an almost-entirely prescribed lesson to implement by his cooperating teacher.

Shortly after presenting Einstein’s quote, Michael again tried to get students to describe the meaning behind a famous quote by evoking Woodrow Wilson and his claim that the United States of America should seek “to make the world safe for democracy” through World War I. After receiving little participation by students, Michael broadened his question by asking students what an actual democracy is. What follows is the interaction that he and one student had:

-Student A: “where you control your own government”
-Michael: “Are we a democracy?”

-Student A: “Well, we don’t have a dictator or king or anything”

-Michael: “How do we get the president?”

-Student A: “we vote”

-Michael: “Yes, we vote so we don’t have a bum in the office”

- Student A: “We pretty much did that anyway”

This moment marked the first time Michael had provided his students into a potential controversial and current issue and a place where students could grapple with critical topics and, plainly, use the social studies to achieve its mission. Upon hearing Student A’s comment, however, Michael paused before saying “Okay, so Wilson said that he wanted to spread democracy...That same idea of manifest destiny, well now we are going to try to push the same concepts on Europe. We want Europe to be free” (Field Observation 2, October 13, 2014). When asked shortly afterward what was going through his mind, Michael responded by saying “I knew what he was referring to… and so it’s not that peculiar… even that probably would have led to the most impressive discussion um it wasn’t the direction I want it to go.” He continued by noting, “The students do that a lot and she engages them and I knew what they were trying to do so instead of that I just kept going.” (Second Post Observation Interview, October 13, 2014). Such a quote is representative of Michael’s common theme of staying on track with a planned lesson and standard-based content.

This singular instance was a critical point for data collection regarding Michael’s vision between discussion and democratic education. When blended with Michael’s
earlier comments regarding the incorporation of various perspectives, current issues, and discussion, this snapshot of his pedagogy demonstrates a dichotomy between practice and theory. Michael, in other words, understood where discussion could have led to a fruitful conversation grounded in modern politics (if even tied to Wilson’s presidency), but instead chose to take a “safer” route to combat any potential distractions that may occur (once again reflecting his practical approach to teaching). Ultimately, this microcosm of an example helps demonstrate how Michael conceptualized discussion as a place to achieve the oft-referenced aims of a democratic education, but also saw its practice as having the potential to disrupt the organization of a class.

In his third and final observation – conducted on November 17, 2014 – Michael continued to attempt to incorporate various forms of group-talk into his pedagogy. However, in this lesson, he chose to approach more standard-based topics. More specifically, Michael used this lesson to teach about romanticism and realism in literature and where art fits into society. Throughout this lesson, Michael made a more concerted effort to incorporate topics could lead to discussion into his teaching by asking prompt questions to engage students (e.g., “is the purpose of art to beautify the world?”, “Where do literary movements fit into the history classroom?”, “would you want to hang out with Edgar Allen Poe?”). In each instance, Michael posed the question, allowed two or three students to share, and then moved to either a new slide or a new question. While depth was never a priority with these questions, there was a clear effort to take a prescribed lesson and make it as student-centered as possible. At no point was this more evident than when Michael generated a miniature debate with his students by asking them to identify
themselves as either a realist or a romantic and move to either side of the classroom based on their opinion (subsequently leading to a controlled argument in which students tried to convince one another to join their side).

However, the most critical moment of the lesson involved a single question and bold student response that occurred toward the end of the ninety-minute lesson. Seemingly while to provoke a certain level of discussion, Michael asked the students of the class a question regarding their textbooks and their development. More specifically, Michael asked, “How is your textbook written, and how should it be written?” in attempt to make the topic more relevant to the students’ schooling. Though this question was geared toward literary movements, a student voluntarily noted that they should read texts that are written by more than one party because “If we get a biased opinion, we are going to be ignorant” (an idea reflecting the beliefs of numerous critical theorists such as Anyon and Delpit detailing places of power and a “hidden curriculum”). Michael simply acknowledged the comment and continued to present topics more centered on the issues of literature in the classroom. Again, this critical moment marks a key finding in how Michael, as a preservice social studies teacher, conceptualized discussion as a way to engage students but not as a way to overturn the status quo or discuss issues of power stemming from conduits such as classroom textbooks. Michael, for that matter, did have several moments where he could have brought up the current and critical issues that he mentioned in interviews and informal protocols, but consciously chose not to in an attempt to maintain control of the classroom (in a manner similar to both Adriana and Erin).
Despite his actions as a preservice teacher, it bears repeating that Michael did emphasize the use of discussion throughout all of his written and oral data, and he did this as much if not more than the other five participants. Therefore, Michael did see the value in discussion and did intend on using it, however his teaching practices often fell short of his ambitious goals of bringing discussion and controversy into the social studies classroom.

**Summary of Michael**

Ultimately, Michael’s beliefs toward discussion as a pedagogical approach demonstrated a great deal of potential in terms of connecting the practice with principles of democratic education. Throughout data collection for his coursework and through interviews and protocols developed for this study, Michael consistently expressed his beliefs that discussion was an essential component of effective social studies; often times alluded to controversial issues and the exchanging of multiple perspectives in a constructivist classroom. This was seen in teaching philosophies, hypothetical lesson plans, interviews, and in written-reflections during Senior-Level Social Studies Methods. Despite these beliefs, however, Michael was often hesitant to follow-up on opportunities leading to fruitful discussion in his own classroom. The reasons for why this may have been are both out of the scope of this study and difficult to truly determine. But the words that Michael spoke regarding democratic education (even at their foundational level) often did not match his own pedagogical approaches.

All of this is not to say that Michael did not show potential to successfully use discussion in his classroom. It only hints at the fact that he struggled to juggle the broad
and often idealistic aims of the social studies with the more practical components to teaching like classroom management, standards and accountability, and the expectations and strategies of a cooperating teacher who had a different pedagogical approach (Lotter, 2004; Nieto, 2000; Veenman, 1984). Michael did, however, have a strong foundation for the principles of democratic education and the importance of discussion.

Kathleen.

At the start of the fall of 2014, Erin was a 21-year-old female who was still deciding whether or not she would teach after graduating the following semester. Much like Adriana, Sydney, and Erin, Kathleen took a course with me during her first year in college (Orientation to Education in the fall of 2011). As previously noted, what made Kathleen an interesting participant were her original comments on why she chose the social studies as a content area. While the five other participants all had some form of social studies in their lives that made them want to teach it (be it parental influence, good social studies teachers, a simply love of history), Kathleen chose the social studies because it was “better” than the other subjects. In her own words, Kathleen described her choice by saying “And then social studies, was just like, I had to pick a subject and it wasn’t going to be science or English, and I didn’t want to major in math… so we got social studies.” (Initial Interview, August 20, 2014). This idea of choosing the social studies as somewhat of a last resort made Kathleen’s participation essential to the diversity of the study in that she provided a lens from which the research questions could be answered from a preservice teacher who was not originally interested in the social studies.
It should be noted, however, that despite Kathleen’s original feelings toward the social studies being relatively subdued compared to her colleagues, Kathleen was not shy about the subject and often stressed her opinion on the field in class and in interviews in a manner that demonstrated a keen interest in teaching and the aims of a democratic education. Kathleen, for that matter, may not have originally been excited about the social studies, but by the middle of her second year in the program (fourth year of her undergraduate degree), she had developed a strong interest both in general pedagogy and the ideals underlying the social studies.

Unlike four of the other five candidates (save for Adriana), most of Kathleen’s life had been spent in the Northeast living in a household with what she defined as relatively liberal parents. Kathleen, for that matter, was not raised in the Southeast and, instead, solely moved to attend college. She and Adriana, therefore, made up the two participants who only moved to the Southeast to attend college.

**Kathleen’s conceptions of democratic education.**

Much like others in the study, Kathleen’s beliefs regarding the aims of education and the ideals of a democratic education were grounded in principles of developing well-rounded citizens (broadly reflecting much of the literature presented in chapter two). Kathleen did acknowledge a critical component to education in that she recognized that its inherent value occurs outside of the classroom into a more collective, societal realm. For instance, in her original teaching philosophy that was generated in her initial methods course taken as a junior (fall of 2013), Kathleen noted, “Once students leave the classroom they will always be interacting with elements of social studies. It is imperative,
therefore, that students have the necessary knowledge and skills to function in society.” (Teaching Philosophy, fall of 2014). Her vision of education revolved around ideas of tolerance and the expression of diverse beliefs, “A successful democracy relies on the expression of many different ideas and beliefs … [Teachers] should instill in their students the ability and desire to express their opinions in an educated way” (Teaching Philosophy, fall of 2013). Much like with Fran and Adriana, Kathleen’s vision of an effective, democratic education revolved around teaching students to voice their opinions in an educated manner.

_Citizenship grounded in skills._

Unlike the five other participants in the present study, Kathleen’s vision of democratic education often involved preparing students to enter into society as capable citizens through the development of skills. This idea was one that she described both during her first interview in the fall of 2014 (August 20, 2014) and on her conclusion interview in the fall of 2014 (December 8, 2014). In each case, when asked specifically about her vision of democratic education, Kathleen emphasized the need to develop skills that would make a citizen an effective citizen in their own right. When asked about what these “skills” were (which she referred to as “soft skills”), Kathleen noted “cultural things like making friends, being polite, sharing, shaking hands… things like that” (August 20, 2014). As evidenced by this quote, Kathleen’s vision of being a citizen (and, thus, a portion of democratic education) revolves around learning social norms involving relationships. This was noted without an explicit mention of promoting equality or
equitable conditions for various citizens. Rather, in this isolated instance, Kathleen viewed citizenship as a way to learn how to properly “behave” in society.

An additional skill that Kathleen alluded to on a number of occasions was one that directly aligned with the philosophy of the assistant professor of the senior-level social studies methods course. This was the skill of getting students to construct their own understanding of various facts both within and outside of the social studies classroom. In this sense, Kathleen often felt that an effective citizen had the ability to generate their own opinion upon being provided various facts and perspectives. More specifically, when asked about the aims of education during her initial interview of the fall of 2014, Kathleen noted that:

You have to have some room for them to take that knowledge and process it and do something with it um whether that be like discussions or writing papers or creating presentations or you need to leave room for them to take the factual things that you give them and make conclusions. (Initial Interview, August 20, 2014)

Again, Kathleen here is demonstrated a foundational constructivist approach to education in which students take what they have learned and both generate an interpretation and apply it to their lives. Though Kathleen’s conceptions and description of such a complex topic was understandably foundational, the previous quote does seem to serve as evidence of that Kathleen had begun to develop an understanding of what a constructivist approach involves in the social studies classroom.
Kathleen’s visions of discussion.

During the session of her senior level social studies methods in which the assistant professor of the course had the students respond to the question of whether discussion is worth the trouble, Kathleen provided a response that reflected those of her peers. Kathleen’s response was answered with a preface containing a note on the practicality of discussion. “While discussion can take a lot of prep, and pre-teaching, discussion is ultimately worth the trouble” (In-Class Written Response, October 14, 2014). Though this line was followed by a response heavily supporting the use of discussion in the social studies classroom (which will be further discussed in chapter six), it also demonstrates Kathleen’s justifiable concern with integrating a difficult pedagogical approach into her own classroom.

Interestingly, in the same response, Kathleen returned to her idea of developing “skills” in order to help develop a student develop into a well-functioning, future citizen. Upon describing the merit of using discussion, which Kathleen defined as “Students expressing, sharing and responding to their own ideas and the ideas of others” (Post-Initial Interview Questionnaire, August 21, 2014), Kathleen noted:

A discussion should be something students are taught, as well as something they prepare for. The skill set needed for a discussion are [sic] academic and professional which may not be natural for students. Students also need time to prepare for a discussion. Their contributions to a discussion should be well thought out and researched. (In-Class Reflection Prompt, October 14, 2014)
Kathleen, here, focuses again on the practicality of incorporating an effective discussion by emphasizing the need for preparation through research and practice (as opposed to spontaneity). Within the same class session in which Kathleen wrote these responses to the reflection prompt, she also noted the difficult of facilitating an effective discussion given the diversity of each class. When asked to discuss the merits of using discussion, Kathleen expressed similar views as her peers in regards to practicality by noting:

Discussion is another way for students to demonstrate their learning and it’s another way you can include different learning styles. I think … when I think about discussion in terms of the classes I’m going to have next semester like… there’s a lot of students that have very apparent … like autism or other disabilities like that’s something you have to think about in terms of discussions… their abilities will impact their success in discussion. (In-Class Comment, October 14, 2014)

Much like with Fran and Michael, Kathleen appeared to prioritize the practicality of using discussion over the ultimate benefits of its integration into the social studies classroom. In other words, Kathleen often concerned herself first and foremost with her ability to facilitate an effective discussion before considering the reasons for doing so (which she would consistently pair with what she viewed as the aims of education). This is understandable, as Barton and McCully (2007) note, “It is all too easy for discussion to deteriorate into unproductive free-for-alls on the one hand, or thinly veiled recitations with occasional student comments on the other” (p. 1). Rather than emphasizing the
many benefits of discussion, Kathleen focused on concerns similar to those mentioned by Barton and McCully such as maintaining control of her students, accommodating the various learning abilities, and covering the content in an efficient manner.

This is in no way, however, reflective of her views toward the use of discussion, which were consistently positive. Upon being asked in the fall of 2013 whether or not she intended on using discussion in her own classroom in the future, Kathleen referenced her own learning experiences in a secondary classroom by claiming that:

> I think my high school was very discussion based and I really liked it because I think it allows you – it helps me better process things and it helps – if you talk something out you learn it better and you have to hear what other people say and also more what you believe about the events (Interview, September 20, 2013)

Kathleen, here, expresses her fondness for discussion as a pedagogical approach by reflecting on its value as a former student, not as a future teacher. This was interesting, as she – a soon to be teacher – reflected not on her course readings or in-class activities, but instead on her own experiences with discussion when she was in high school. Though certainly outside of the scope of the current study, this is reminiscent of Lortie’s (1975) “apprenticeship of observation” in which teachers are more influenced by what they have experienced in their own education than what they read or learn about in their teacher education programs.

Similarly, when asked in the same interview to describe any instructional strategies that could assist in achieving the aims of education mentioned earlier in
her case report, Kathleen noted that “discussions are good because that makes students really think about what they believe” (Interview, September 20, 2013). Though this comment was not fleshed out, it does demonstrate Kathleen’s view of discussion being an effective way of hearing other individual’s perspectives and, subsequently, critiquing their own based on new knowledge.

When examining the best practices video, Kathleen approached it from a different perspective. Kathleen did not describe the best practices video as being an example of an effective discussion. Though the video was selected because it was an attempted discussion and it did have flaws, Kathleen was the only one to show a level of criticism toward the video shown. In describing the teaching that occurred in the video, Kathleen noted that students “seemed like they spoke to the teacher more so than they did each other. And it wasn’t a discussion so much as it was really – kids raising their hand to give an opinion” (September 9, 2014, In-Class Discussion on Best Practices Video). She did not believe, therefore, that the teaching in the video was as effective as it could have been in terms of having students collaborate through a discussion. Kathleen later noted that she did not feel as though the students in the classroom would have learned much in the way of skills or content upon leaving the classroom. After having said this, Kathleen was then asked whether this was due to the content taught or the instruction, to which she said “both” and that they students never went beyond the foundational definitions of “rights” and “privileges”. Upon noting this, Kathleen appears to have been the only participant to focus on the strength of the teaching based on the students’ development in terms of content. By noting that students never appeared to go beyond the basic content being
discussed, she was critiquing the teaching in the video based on content as opposed to instruction.

One topic that was not described by Kathleen was the basic skill of teaching students how to discuss. Ultimately, Kathleen never alluded to the fact that the students in the video were often listening to one another, exchanging ideas, and challenging opinions. Rather, she chose to focus both in her written reflections and classroom conversation on the video more on the practical components including turn taking and the role of the facilitator (in this case, the teacher). This idea is one that has been reflected in several other participants and it is – although a speculative comment – somewhat natural for a preservice teacher to do prior to entering into the classroom for the first time.

This is not to say, however, that Kathleen did not see value in the use of discussion in the social studies classroom. Rather, she frequently described it as being essential to the classroom and the development of citizens who are capable of participating in rational dialogue. For instance, though she was hesitant to say she though the teacher in the best practices video was conducting an efficient discussion, she did note, “the students are connecting their own ideas to the class discussion and coming up with their own understanding” (Best Practices Video Reflection #2, December 8, 2014). In this sense, Kathleen was connecting the discussion that was occurring with a critical component to democratic education: that of having students work collaboratively to generate their own interpretations of material.
Kathleen’s teaching.

Throughout the course of data collection, Kathleen was observed teaching two times. In both of these observations, there appeared a dichotomy between what Kathleen wanted to be as a teacher and who she was on account of her cooperating teacher and a variety of contributing factors. In regards to her cooperating teacher, Kathleen mirrored a sentiment put forth by several other participants in that she described her as the following:

My CT is real nice and supportive and she is really willing to talk to me about her experience and what she does and um like very open to make sure that I teach when I need to and if I have any questions she’s open to talk about them. I mean, I don’t really want to be like her as a teacher. She’s very respected by the students and very loved. So I wouldn’t mind being like that. But, um, she’s very old school, very PowerPoint. Sometimes she uses the textbook. (Conclusion Interview, December 8, 2014).

In other words, Kathleen recognized the extent to which her cooperating teacher had constructed a positive rapport with her students and consistently felt supported by her cooperating teacher. However, she often referred to the lack of effort put forth by her students and the tendency to let students “slip through the cracks” by either providing them with easy assessments or not accommodating their learning needs. With either situation, Kathleen worried about her student teaching due to a limited amount of rigor within the class she was placed in for the 2014-2015 academic year.
Despite this, however, Kathleen did try her best to make the most of her own teaching experiences. For instance, on her first observation (which occurred on October 6, 2014), Kathleen used a PowerPoint prepared by her cooperating teacher to teach a ninth grade class about world culture. Kathleen, however, added various elements to the presentation to make it more engaging and thought-provoking for her students. Rather than present students with a concrete vision of what culture is, she explicitly stated to her students that “there is no right or wrong answer on what culture is” before beginning a lesson meant to get students to critically think about culture in an open-ended manner. Such an approach reflected the constructivist approach of teaching previously discussed in which students are encouraged to develop their own understandings of abstract content based on research, previous experiences, and conversations with peers.

Though she attempted to do this in a variety of ways, the most pertinent to the current research was seen in her attempt to show her students an illustration of the Mbuti tribe and having students analyze the various cultural elements contained within the image. Upon being shown the depiction for the first time, students spent a little less than 10 minutes writing down ideas about the Mbuti people and describing their culture based on the image. Upon having done this, Kathleen then directed the students to volunteer to individually describe to the class what conclusions they arrived during their own interpretations (a moment reflecting her emphasis on constructivist teaching).
After having explored the image both individually and collectively, students then spent about 15 minutes engaging in a teacher-facilitated discussion on the many components of the image. In each instance, the students responded directly to Kathleen about what they saw in the photo and how they interpreted the Mbuti culture. Despite such an approach, this moment did reflect Kathleen’s attempts at incorporating a different version of teaching into her field placement; a form of teaching, for that matter, that involved higher-order thinking and the exchanging of ideas through the use of conversation (however structured it may have been).

Aside from this singular moment, however, most of Kathleen’s teaching appeared to be directly influenced by the more traditional pedagogy practiced by her cooperating teacher such as the use of lecture and presentations to provide notes. Regardless of whether this occurred on account of Kathleen trying to not deviate from what her students knew how to do or what her cooperating teacher allowed her to attempt, each of the two observations demonstrated a dichotomy between Kathleen’s stated aims for the social studies classroom and her students’ growth and the way in which she taught her lessons. More specifically, during the observations, Kathleen used a relatively teacher-centered approach. With the exception of the aforementioned conversation on the Mbuti people as well as a brief worksheet students filled out in pairs, Kathleen remained the focal point of each observation as well as the purveyor of content throughout each lesson.

Kathleen, after her second observation, claimed, “I wasn’t super comfortable with what I was doing. I didn’t have the PowerPoint’s beforehand so that also was part
of it… But also I’m just a very different presence than my CT and so they aren’t use to me nor do I really have the authority in a classroom” (Post Observation Interview, October 16, 2014). Such a quote is further reflective of both Kathleen’s vision of teaching being somewhat at odds with that of her cooperating teacher and as well as her prioritizing of maintaining a certain level of “control” within her classroom.

Regardless of how Kathleen’s two observations went, she consistently maintained the goal of providing higher expectations for her students the following semester when she would have more authority and would know the students a bit better. For instance, when asked how she would teach the following semester, Kathleen claimed:

I’d like to give them a purpose… a meaning to it! When we talked about the Middle East it was like a five slide PowerPoint and the middle east could be so interesting to talk about but it was so boring! Make it more interesting and do something different! (Conclusion Interview, December 8, 2014)

Kathleen, on that note, did not simply want her students to learn the material. Rather, she wanted them to understand it and be able to apply it to their own lives and believed this could only be feasible when the content was provided in detail and made meaningful and relevant. Reflecting this idea, Kathleen consistently noted various forms of teaching that could provide her students with a more rigorous classroom experience. When describing the diversity in the class, for instance, Kathleen noted that “I don’t even know how a discussion in that class would work… I definitely want to try it and I am going to spend some time asking my teacher how you address all of those different students in that class”
(Post Observation Interview, December 3, 2014). Such a comment reflects an overarching theme of the participants trying to understand how to incorporate the different abilities and backgrounds of students in a class discussion. Again, Kathleen takes a practical approach to using discussion in that she concerns herself more with her ability to conduct a successful discussion than the reasons why even attempting one would be useful for her students.

**Summary of Kathleen.**

Similar to her peers, Kathleen often grounded her views toward the field of education in broad principles of democratic education (specifically emphasizing the citizenship component of democratic education). This vision was, however, different in that it was often viewed as only plausible through the development of certain “skills” that could be translated later into effective citizenship. Relevant to the current study, Kathleen viewed the ability to interact with peers (often through discussion) as one of the skills that students needed to develop prior to becoming functioning members of society.

More specifically, Kathleen’s views of discussion often reflected broad theories of education as put forth by several of the leading scholars in social studies education (e.g., Parker and Hess). Kathleen consistently noted how discussion allows students to express their own opinions and develop a certain level of tolerance for the views of others. Such views, however, were often paired with an understandable concern for the practicality of using discussion (especially as novice educator). Kathleen consistently noted the positives to using discussion as a pedagogical
approach, but feared what may happen if the discussion goes poorly or if the students run out of topics to discuss with one another (the latter being a comment made within the first two months of entering into the social studies education program and not alluded to past that point). In her own words, Kathleen claimed:

I don’t think a social studies classroom can be completely discussion based cause if you’re always discussing eventually you’ll run out of things to discuss. But it’s one of my favorite things to do as a student, so I would definitely want to do it in the classroom. (Interview, September 25, 2013)

Though early in the social studies education program, Kathleen here is already discussing both the value of using discussion as well as potential issues that may occur if she were to try to incorporate a discussion into the social studies classroom. Despite it being hard to imagine students “run[ing] out of things to discuss” in an effective classroom, it is easy to imagine how a preservice teacher could initially be concerned with this idea, as many of the participants in this study alone concerned themselves simply with covering the content and filling up an entire class period with activities, an issue seen in Erin’s class when she covered for her own cooperating teacher who was absent one day.

Sydney.

At the time of the current study, Sydney was a 21-year-old female who was majoring in social studies education. Though she started as an elementary education major, Sydney quickly transitioned into a secondary history education major (consistently emphasizing the historical component to her degree). Sydney, however, also noted
throughout the study her plans for after graduating would briefly remove her from the field of education. Though she did intend on teaching in the United States eventually, her plan for after graduation involved travelling to Europe for a year and working as a nanny. Sydney’s interest in travelling internationally more than likely influenced her visions of education, as will be seen in the current individual case report.

*Sydney’s conceptions of democratic education.*

Sydney’s approach to democratic education merits an analysis constructed differently than the other five participants. Because of her emphasis on literacy and global education, these two ideas will first be described prior to synthesizing her understandings of democratic education.

*Sydney’s vision of literacy and the social studies.*

What made Sydney stand out from the other five participants stemmed from her own background and interest in being a lifelong reader and learner. Sydney noted early on in the study that she was disappointed in early childhood education as a major because she did not feel challenged academically and she did not feel as though she would have the opportunity to continue learning and – more specifically – reading “new” content. This view was seen multiple times over throughout her classwork, interviews, and teaching. Sydney, in this sense, continually emphasized the need for literacy within the social studies. While other students frequently mentioned critical thinking, broadly, and the role of the social studies in developing such forms of thinking, Sydney went a step further to note the importance of reading in developing historical and critical thinking (she frequently emphasized the historical aspect to social studies). For instance, when
asked shortly after her initial interview about the purpose of education, Sydney wrote, “Education should allow students to be literate, and promote creative analytical thinking” (Initial Interview Follow Up Questions”). Upon being asked how social studies teachers could foster the aims of education, Sydney claimed:

Uh, encourage reading I think is huge and maybe that’s just selfish cause that’s where I learned to love history from reading books about real people and historical novels. I mean, now that I’m a history major I kind of look upon them with scorn like historical fiction is stupid, but as an elementary students, that’s kind of what I loved and what got me interested in history um, because even if it was a book from a long, long time ago I still I saw humanity really hadn’t changed as much and that was really cool for me to see and really allowed for me to have a broad perspective on the world that I feel like a lot of people miss especially in today’s society when everything is so fast paced. (Initial Interview, August 22, 2014)

This ideal of using reading as a way to effectively teach the social studies was also evident in her formal interview in the fall of 2013 within her initial social studies methods course taken as a third year student. When asked about her ideal history teacher and history class, Sydney responded by saying:

Mine would be reading historical novels. And then, um, not novels, well maybe novels. I don’t know. Not necessarily historical fiction but good historical books. And then talking about them like a literary class just because I love engaging
books and that’s what got me excited about history in the first place. (Interview, Junior-Level Social Studies Methods, September 23, 2013)

This was a consistent theme in Sydney’s data. Regardless of the context or the form of data, Sydney consistently alluded to the importance of using literacy to promote critical thinking and growth in students. Such views toward the place of literacy in the social studies classroom directly impacted her view of the purposes of education and ideals toward democratic education.

Though never explicitly connected, Sydney’s views on discussion in the social studies classroom often reflected the value she placed on literacy. To Sydney, both promoting literacy and teaching through discussion give students the opportunity to think for themselves in a manner that helped promote both imaginative thinking and the development of one’s own views toward complex ideals and in many cases, it became clear that Sydney wanted to use literature to create discussion on primary and secondary sources within the social studies. As seen in the previous comment in which she described her ideal social studies teacher, Sydney noted that the perfect teacher would provide a multitude of sources and then have students collaborate with one another through some form of discussion.

*Democratic education and the “Good Life”.*

What was also intriguing about Sydney’s vision of an effective education was her view on the purposes of formal schooling. Rather than emphasizing traditional responses of democratic education, citizenship, and simply learning content, Sydney took a different approach in that she emphasized the development of autonomous and motivated
learners. In her own words, Sydney was asked about the aims of education, to which she noted that students must:

   Learn how to be part of this world and contribute to it. Learn what you’re passionate about and pursue as a person um, yeah, and the ultimately to be self-driven education that would be the goal. To ultimately allow students to want to learn not because you told them to. (Initial Interview, August 22, 2014)

Sydney’s vision of the aims of education reflected those mentioned in chapter two of the current dissertation and the views of Gutmann’s (1999) “Good Life” in which the schools are set up to provide every student with an equal opportunity to determine their own view of the “good life” and obtain such a life. Her vision of democratic education may not have been as influenced as those of the other participants in that she did not emphasize traditional ideas of voting, following the news, and participating in various forms of politics. Rather, her vision of democratic education was often driven with an emphasis on the person, not the community.

   Reflecting several previously presented quotes, Sydney similarly emphasized the development of the individual by claiming in her post-initial interview reflection protocol that the purpose of the social studies (and, in her vision, history) is as follows:

   [To] help ground students, and care about things that matter. Our world is obsessed with technology and fast paced communication, and it is very easy to get caught up in scrolling through Buzzfeed quizzes and Netflix bingeing. Reading about wonderful men and women that have changed the world is a reminder that
life in a beautiful adventure. Social studies education opens students’ eyes to the reality that they have a past, they matter, and they are expected to do great things.

*Global education as a theme of education.*

Despite placing an emphasis on the growth of students on an individual level, Sydney’s vision of effective teaching was also reached to levels broader than any other participant. Beyond promoting literacy and the “good life” at the individual level, Sydney also had took a different approach to the other participants in that she often took an international approach to both her ways of thinking about education and the lessons in which she incorporated into her classroom. In regards to the former, several artifacts demonstrate Sydney’s vision for global education. For instance, when describing the purposes of education in her first formal questionnaire (Interview Protocol #3) Sydney noted that:

> It is incredibly important that students have a clear worldview, and an understanding of how to respect people that are unlike them. Social studies does this by teaching that everyone has a story. As diverse as people seem to be, the human condition is universal. Across the globe and time, people care about similar things, we pursue similar passions, we make similar mistakes, and we learn from them in similar ways.

In a similar manner, two observations of Sydney revolved around a lesson in which she started by providing her students with a simply activity; to look at the tags on their partner’s shirt and find out where the shirt was made. She then created a list on the board which detailed each country and explained to students that the class they were in
had a large range of countries represented simply demonstrated by the fabrics students were wearing. Though this activity was part of a larger objective of teaching students about how a global market both works and can be seen in almost every corner of American society, it provides a small representation of how Sydney incorporated international components into a course which could very easily have been limited to the United States of America. When later asked about this T-shirt activity, Sydney remarked that:

So I really wanted to just make it relevant, so I used the teaching video…um cause I had every student look at their tags and their t-shirts before the video and write down where it came from and we had countries from all over the world so that got them thinking on an entire global scale … this whole t-shirt project kind of highlights that this is coming from your closet, you’re involved in this t-shirt making process, you’re involved in the economy, cause I’m pretty sure every high schooler [sic] bought a t-shirt before and that was my primarily entry into the lesson, give them eyes to see how their economic decisions impact the world and other cultures and countries and just kind of globally what that looks like (Post Observation Interview, 10-13-2014).

Though it is difficult to pinpoint why Sydney placed emphasis on global education throughout data collection, it is interesting to consider how her experiences travelling (and future plans of working in Italy) may have shaped her ideals for the classroom. This is especially true when paired with Sydney describing her understanding of many of the ideas she had been introduced to within her teacher education program; “I am learning a
lot of theories, and I just don't have the teaching experience to fully understand them.” (In-Class Reflection, September 30). In other words – and as will be fully investigated when summarizing Sydney’s report, Sydney often developed her own vision of education (and discussion) based on her own experiences and beliefs. Unlike the other participants who often had a tendency of reciting familiar phrases and ideas discussed in their courses, Sydney constructed her own understandings in a manner that often reflected popular objectives within Academia, but tailored to her own life. And at no point was this clearer than throughout her conceptions, beliefs, and understandings of discussion in the social studies classroom.

*Sydney’s Vision of Discussion.*

In her junior-level social studies methods course in the fall of 2013, Sydney was asked to describe her ideal social studies teacher and classroom. This was well before the current research questions had been developed or before I – as the instructor of this methods course – had the opportunity to conduct my own lesson on discussion in the social studies classroom. Sydney responded to this prompt question by quickly saying, “Discussion. Even though that’s not exactly practical for k-12 classes. But like college, doing outside reading and discussing it in class and expanding on things” (Interview, September 23, 2013). In that same interview Sydney was asked what type of teacher she envisioned herself being in her second year of teaching and she wishfully described herself as “interactive” and “doing a lot of discussion in groups.”

Her justification for discussion reflected her ideas about making the social studies relevant and applicable. In her teaching philosophy, Sydney noted:
Students should know to listen and respect the teacher when he or she is instructing the class. They should also learn the importance of respecting each other. They should be given the opportunity to form their own opinions about historical events; using and applying both new and old life experiences. Through this, students should then be able to participate in discussion and creative application. (Sydney, Teaching Philosophy, Senior Level Social Studies Methods, Fall 2014)

Sydney, in other words, sees discussion as a component of having students first constructing their own opinion of an historical event and then applying it to their life where it is useful and relevant.

These ideals were also reflected in her initial lesson plan created for her junior-level social studies methods course. In this lesson that she developed independently, Sydney envisioned providing her students with a copy of the Monroe Doctrine followed by time for both small group discussion (3-4 members for five minutes) and then a class analysis of the John Gast painting entitled “American Progress”. Moreover, Sydney’s emphasis on collaboration in the K12 classroom can be seen early in her program and, as will be seen when describing her teaching, likely influenced her own pedagogical practices.

These statements and practices, though somewhat removed from the core, critical ideas of her senior-level social studies methods course and the teacher education program, which she was attending, are critical to interpreting Sydney’s beliefs and conceptualizations of discussion as a pedagogical approach. Unlike several of the other
participants, Sydney had prioritized discussion as a pedagogical strategy early in her teacher education program. In other words, she had recognized its inherent value within the classroom and – despite taking a practical approach when describing its plausibility – noted its importance in what she considered to be an “ideal” classroom.

When further pressed on the purpose of discussion in the K12 classroom, Sydney responded by noting:

[E]veryone comes from different backgrounds, ethnicities and even gender and different socioeconomic backgrounds so that can just bring a lot of different ideas if students get talking about themselves and like ….. that could really change people and what they hold onto regarding different things about history. And if you get people talking about different ideas and somebody sees something a different way, it could get students to see things that they hadn’t seen. (Interview, Junior-level Social Studies Methods, September 23, 2013).

Such a quote is reflective of Sydney’s vision of education as a way to open students’ minds to the values of others. And though she did not go so far as to get students to see discussion as a way to prepare students to either enter into the public sphere or work toward correcting social inequities, she did demonstrate a working understanding of how discussion connected to principles of democratic education in terms of diversity and tolerance, which is not something to be taken lightly because it shows potential for Sydney to become a truly effective educator by all standards. As noted by Causey et al., (1999) “prospective teachers who display a disposition to thoughtfulness and reflection are the most likely candidates for such cognitive restructuring and new learning” (p. 43).
Sydney’s comment demonstrates this kind of thoughtful disposition that shows both that she has learned and she could continue to do so in a manner that will make her an educator capable of enacting change in the classroom.

As another example, Sydney was asked in class to summarize the purpose of discussion in the social studies classroom (or, relevant to this research, her beliefs and conceptions toward discussion as a pedagogical practice). Much of what Sydney wrote was practical in nature in the sense that she emphasized how to conduct a classroom discussion as opposed to why to do so (a direction completely within parameters of the original prompt question). What was intriguing and relevant to the current study and Sydney’s vision of discussion, however, can be seen toward the end of her response when she notes:

Students need to know that they are not going to be publicly ridiculed when they speak up in class. I think that more than grades, most students are worried about being liked and respected by their peers. I think they are terrified of saying something that could be taken as “stupid”, or “wrong” by the general high school opinion. It is up to me as an educator to get rid of these stipuations [sic]. (In Class Reflection, 10-14-2014)

Similarly, upon being asked on the first day of her senior-level social studies methods course to write about the purpose of the social studies, Sydney wrote that, “Social studies teaches students that not only do they matter as individuals, but every person is human, like them, and every human matters as well” (In-Class Reflection, 8-26-2014).
Again, Sydney’s vision of the social studies is shrouded in both growth in the individual and their ability to see where they fit into the larger public sphere.

As described in chapter two of the current dissertation, Sydney showed foundational themes of making students know that their voice carries value within a discussion; be it at the local level or within a larger context. This was frequently seen in her teaching, as she emphasized encouraging students to recognize their importance through interviews and written prompts as well as in her teaching where she constantly encouraged students to speak and the rest of the class to listen. Though perhaps this latter emphasis occurring in the classroom was a sub-conscious decision, it impacted her teaching in that Sydney rarely used the classroom as a way to solely present knowledge or include the ideas of a handful of students. Rather, she made a seemingly concerted effort when teaching to get students to both use their own voices and question her own. When asked to describe discussion as a pedagogical approach, Sydney remarked that it is a “way for students to ask questions, challenge myself, and each other” (Initial Interview Post Follow Up Questions, 8-25-2014). And as will be described more thoroughly in the follow section, such ideals heavily influenced who Sydney was as a teacher and her vision of effective teaching.

*Sydney as a teacher.*

Such a sentiment was seen in practice throughout Sydney’s formal observations. The first two observations of Sydney were of the same lesson that occurred about 10 school days apart. Sydney was the first student to requested being observed teaching the same lesson and – though such a plan would not have been useful for the entire study – in
this case it allowed for an exploration into how she adjusted a solid lesson based on student and cooperating teacher feedback. Though this question is out of the scope of the study, the lesson was relevant enough to the present research questions that a conscious decision was made to see the lesson twice with two different classes.

In brief, a portion of Sydney’s first and second lessons consisted of her providing students (who worked in pairs) with a two to three sentence scenario detailing how businesses work. Each scenario involved an organization having to convince “the government” (which Sydney served as) to allow them to either continue their current business model or, perhaps, outsource their product development. Students had ten minutes to work with their partners to generate an argument at which point one representative of the pairing was expected to go up to the front of the classroom and work to convince Sydney (again, serving as the government) of their production plan. The point for doing this activity – it seems - was for students to work collaboratively to construct an argument and then present it in a formalized manner to a “governing body”.

Reflecting back on a previous conversation with a history professor who claimed she “skirted around an argument” in a paper, Sydney described the inspiration for this lesson by saying:

We have to do that all time and in undergrad and grad school and the thesis and the act of forming an argument and defending in never goes away. And that just isn’t with academia, that is anywhere in the world … any kind of discipline, we’ll always have to back up our opinion and stuff like that and so that’s why I
briefly think that’s really cool how as teachers we get to start that really early.  
(Sydney, Field Observation 1 Interview, October 13, 2014)

This idea was reflected in a written reflection she completed for her senior level social studies methods course in which she was asked to respond to a course reading about how to integrating writing into the social studies.

The reality is, no matter what vocational discipline students find themselves in, they will be asked to persuade people to believe in their thoughts or ideas. How are students going to learn to eloquently and efficiently create and produce their own thoughts if they are never asked to practice? (In-Class Written Reflection, September 23, 2014)

Perhaps this is why when she was asked in class why discussion was important, she claimed:

You learn how to communicate your thoughts to people. Even if they’re not historians, they’re still going to have to communicate their thoughts to people and um to make it persuasive and use logic in their argument and stuff. (Senior-Level Social Studies Methods Comment, October 14, 2014)

Expanding upon this idea, Sydney also went beyond the need to create an argument and see the merit in the rational ideas of other students; she also emphasized the value both in being wrong and in teaching students that their voices matter in terms of content and class discussions. More specifically, Sydney, when asked after her first formal observation to describe what she felt her students learned from this lesson that may not have been taught through a traditional lectured noted that:
I want them to feel comfortable to ask me questions in class and to okay with being possibly wrong in class and I’m not going to shut them down. And I think that was a good way to be more presentable as a teacher and to let them know that their opinions are good and that they matter and they are worth listening to… and that they can have the whole class listen to them talk for however short it was and give them their full attention, it just sort of show them that their voice matters… sounds sappy, but… (October 13, 2014)

Though neither supported by research or explicitly grounded in any formal principles discussed in her coursework (e.g., multiculturalism, constructivism, collaboration), Sydney’s previous quote is one that demonstrates her interest in providing opportunities for students to exchange viewpoints in an collaborative environment where everyone’s voice matters.

Such a claim and ideal was supported when Sydney was asked whether or not the teacher in the Best Practices video represented a model teacher candidate. Sydney responded by nothing that, “Definitely... [S]he listened to what she had to say, which is cool cause she allowed them to have a voice and to share their diverse opinions.” Here, Sydney is noting that the teacher in the video did a strong job of building a classroom environment that is open to the perspectives of many and [at least to an extent] not dominated by a teacher.

All of this appears to demonstrate how Sydney viewed discussion in the collaboration (often in various forms of group-talk) as a way to promote students who engage with the content and one another in a more meaningful and powerful manner.
And while many of her peers in her Senior-Level Social Studies Methods course acknowledged discussion as a great tool for engaging students and teaching them about diversity (to various extents), Sydney took a different approach when acknowledging the value of discussion and integrating it into her classroom. Sydney instead considered discussion as a way to introduce students to new topics (on an international level), teach students to form rational, evidence-based arguments, and – ultimately – to teach them that their voice matters within a public sphere. Discussion, therefore, was a tool that Sydney – though perhaps not perfect at using – acknowledged as being critical to generating an effective lesson.

Though it is certainly difficult to make definitive claims on why Sydney used discussion (or some form of group-talk) more than the other participants, one possible answer comes from her cooperating teacher. Sydney’s CT, for that matter, always appeared receptive to Sydney’s requests and invested in her development as a teacher. While conducting observations of Sydney for this study, Sydney’s CT remained in the classroom, using the desk of a student, and taking diligent notes which he later used to debrief with her. Though, again, this is purely speculative, perhaps the confidence that Sydney had to attempt to incorporate various forms of group-talk into her teaching was impacted by her cooperating teacher’s willingness to allow her to find her own space and use approaches that she could learn from herself.

**Summary of Sydney.**

Sydney’s vision of education often connected to components of a democratic education (in this case, creating autonomous citizens who can formulate an argument),
but it also appeared to be heavily influenced by her visions of creating students who wanted to read, and write, and learn simply because of the experience they get from doing so. This practice, though one that should be encouraged, was likely not one that was emphasized specifically in her social studies coursework and, therefore, probably came to fruition in her previous experiences both in and out of the classroom (and perhaps in her content-area literacy course). Moreover, Sydney remarked on multiple occasions that she failed to truly grasp how many theories learned within her teacher education program connected to her teaching practice. Because of this, it appears as though Sydney took the ideas she did gain and situate them within her own experiences and beliefs.

This was nowhere truer than within her vision of discussion. Sydney – like many of her colleagues – focused on the use of diversity in discussion. She consistently alluded to discussion as critical to the classroom because it taught students that they mattered, and so do their peers. However, Sydney’s vision of discussion was tied to both individual growth, as demonstrated by her emphasis on creating arguments and valuing oneself, and global interconnectedness. In each case, Sydney saw discussion as a means for improving both the individual and the collectivity body at any level. This was something unique to Sydney and likely a trait that impacted her teaching, which often created a space for students to exchange ideas, recognize the value in their voices, and construct knowledge on topics relevant to their lives yet outside the scope of their local community.
CHAPTER FIVE: Cross Case Analysis and Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to synthesize each of the five individual case reports through a rigorous cross-case analysis. An aim for this present research study was to explore the associations preservice social studies teachers made between the instructional strategy of discussion and broad theories of democratic education. As described in chapter one, the research questions used to guide the study – and ultimately be answered through this chapter – were as follows:

(1) What is the nature of preservice social studies teachers’ conceptions of discussion as a pedagogical approach?
   a) How do preservice social studies teachers (PSTs) define discussion?
   b) What is the nature of PST’s beliefs about discussion as a pedagogical approach?
   c) To what extent can PSTs identify discussion as a pedagogical approach?

(2) How do preservice social studies teachers connect practices of discussion with theories of democratic education
   b) To what extent do PSTs internalize principles of democratic education advocated for by a teacher education program?

As mentioned within chapter three, I sought to never directly ask any of the research questions to the study’s participants in an attempt to prevent them from knowing the purpose of my study. However, mid-way through the semester the assistant professor of the senior level methods course conducted a lesson on discussion within the social studies classroom (heavily framed around Hess’s “Is Discussion Worth the Trouble?”). Toward the middle of the lesson, the professor asked the following question to the
students of the course: “What’s the importance of discussion – particularly when we think of educational jargon and philosophies of education for democratic citizenship and all of that stuff… um, what was… what’s the connection to the larger theme of social studies education?” By asking this question to the students, the assistant professor essentially asked the participants (who were, at the time, being video recorded) the primary questions that this current research study was attempting to answer. Not only did he ask about the value preservice teachers place on the use of discussion (“What’s the importance of discussion?”), he also asked them to connect the use of discussion to the field of social studies education. What followed were a number of fascinating answers that fit well into the codes that had been developing from participants’ data for the two months prior to this class session. The purpose of this chapter is to dissect the participants’ responses on that day as well as throughout the study to answer the research questions guiding this study.

Finding One: Definitions and Identifications of Discussion Varied

As the research continued to look into how discussion was defined and identified by the participants (a larger part of the first research question), themes began to emerge regarding the how the participants differed in their definitions of discussion and the ways in which they identified it within the classroom. Discussion (and group-talk as a whole) is an inherently abstract and complex concept (Parker & Hess, 2001; Preskill, 1997). As seen in chapter two, discussion in and of itself is an individually constructed word that can be defined in a number of different ways (Bridges, 1988, Preskill, 1997). The various components of discussion and the purposes for using this approach also differ based on
the participant. This was evident throughout the study as participants were asked to define discussion and identify discussion in multiple ways (e.g. interviews, written reflections, class assignments). Aside from the idea of discussion being a collaborative approach to teaching in which multiple students exchange ideas that they learned in a constructivist classroom (a broad idea demonstrated in 5 of the 6 participants’ initial definitions of discussions; see Table 5), the views of what discussion is and can be used for differed based on participant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Initial Definitions of Discussion (Post Initial Interview Written Responses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kathleen</td>
<td>Students expressing, sharing and responding to their own ideas and the ideas of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fran</td>
<td>Having a conversation between the students, the teacher, and other students in order to share and discuss opinions or questions about the lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erin</td>
<td>Conversation for students to argue their perspectives while listening to how others interpret something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>A way for students to ask questions, challenge myself, and each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana</td>
<td>Students sharing their thoughts and opinions on the material to learn from one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Participants Initial Definitions of Discussion

It should be noted at this point that it was often tough to differentiate between how participants defined discussion and the ways in which they identified it as a practice both in their own teaching and in other data sources (e.g., the best practices video, their cooperating teachers’ practices, the methods learned in their senior level methods class). Many times it became apparent that the ways in which the participants defined discussion impacted the extent to which they could define a discussion (as it has been broadly defined in chapter two). With this in mind, the present section does attempt to detail how
the participants defined and identified discussion, but does not try to make the case that the two are mutually exclusive.

Participants rarely differentiated discussion from various forms of “group talk”, as I have attempted to do in chapter two of the current dissertation. Rather, terms used to describe specific forms of group-talk (e.g., discussion, debate, dialogue, conversation) were often used interchangeably. This is despite the fact that the assistant professor of the senior-level social studies methods presented the following image to the students on October 14, 2014:

![Diagram of Discussion Instruction](image)

**Figure 2: Discussion Instruction PowerPoint Slide**

Once presented with this slide, the students were asked several follow up questions regarding their conceptions of a discussion. Essentially, this was a moment in which the students were asked to respond freely to a question regarding their understanding of what a discussion actually is. The professor had yet to provide any detailed descriptions of the various facets of discussion, nor had he provided any specific instructions for how he
wanted them to respond. Despite the figure being shown to students, the participants’ answers remained framed around discussion being synonymous with other forms of group-talk. It should be noted, however, that participants did associate various forms of group-talk with discussion. For instance, within her reflection on whether discussion is worth it in the classroom, Kathleen did write that:

> In designing a lesson that includes discussion, teachers need to be cognizant of the type of discussion they want their students to participate in. A discussion, a debate, and a Socratic seminar are three different types of activities and each one has a different skill set that students need to learn before participating. (In-Class Reading Response, October 14, 2014)

Though Kathleen never differentiated between a Socratic seminar, a debate, and a discussion, she did demonstrate an understanding that the three are different and, thus, involve different forms of preparation and different expectations. Whether Kathleen was using discussion as an umbrella term for a Socratic seminar or a debate within this quote (which was how it was presented to her that same day in class) is not known. Although Kathleen did not explicitly state it, the first part of her statement suggests that Kathleen associated debate and a Socratic seminar as a form of discussion, rather than as a separate instructional strategy. In other words, Kathleen viewed discussion as both an “umbrella term” that encompasses other forms of group-talk as well as its own instructional approach. She also claimed that teachers to know their students as well as the content they are seeking for students to understand in order to select the most appropriate strategy for having students collaborate.
Fran also presented a broad understanding of the differences in the various forms of group talk:

I guess I see them along a spectrum, where deliberation is where you are trying to come to a conclusion or answer a question… and then a debate is your argument… you are forming and arguing and refuting an opinion… and then a seminar … it’s just a more open ended discussion. There’s no pressure to form an opinion. It’s just kind of… there’s no to come to an answer, it’s just a … It’s an open-ended discussion.

Fran also was the only participant in the study who noted the importance of the fluidity of a discussion. When asked to assess the teaching occurring in the best practices video, she referred to it as both a “good and bad” discussion. When describing why it was good, she was quick to say, “It is a good discussion cause students feel comfortable expressing their opinions and their views and they feel as though their views are respected and so I think its a good discussion environment in that case where it’s not really forced, they are genuinely having a conversation with each other” (Best Practices Assessment, Second Viewing, December 10, 2014). This was the only comment regarding the environment of a discussion to be found within the data. No other participant remarked about the actual nature of what was occurring in the video, especially in regards to the extent to which the conversation was forced. This added an extra component to the findings, as it asked the question of whether students considered the anatomy (or the nature) of a discussion when constructing their visions of what it would look like in their classroom. Up until this
comment – which occurred in the last week of data collection – this was a topic that had not been approached by any of the participants.

This difference in how the participants defined and viewed discussion was evidence throughout the field observations as well. For instance, Erin’s attempt to ask her students if the government spends too much money provided insight into how she considered the following exchange to be both a “discussion” and a “conversation”:

Erin: “What government programs do we spend too much on?”

Class: Silence

Erin: “Let me rephrase that, what are some government agencies?”

Student A: “NASA?”

Erin: “yes, NASA is a government agency. Anyone else?”

Class: Silence

Though every teacher has experienced this type of response from students at one point or another (and, thus, is in no way reflective of Erin’s teaching abilities), it is noteworthy to the current research that Erin later referenced this moment as being indicative of a conversation and discussion between herself and her students (Wilen, 2004). Erin claiming that the above incident was a “conversation” may mean that she believes the exchanging of any words with students is a form of discussion regardless of the amount of participants, the length of the dialogue, or the extent to which ideas are exchanged. Reflecting on the previously mentioned definitions of discussions by scholars in political theorists, linguists, and educational scholars, such a moment cannot be said to promote growth or collaboration and only consisted of two people, one of who said one word.
This singular incident reflects a vision of discussion (or an ability to identify it) that runs counter to scholars of social studies education and other participants who identified the strategy as being more complex.

It should be noted that this finding was not – and should not – be viewed as a negative when thinking about the participants’ knowledge about discussion and how they view its purposes in the social studies classroom. Rather, these differences are a further reflection of how preservice teachers construct their own visions and understandings of the classroom in the same manner in which their students are expected to construct their own thoughts toward the content presented to them.

This is also not to say that participants’ views of discussion did not evolve as the semester progressed. What it does demonstrate, however, is that the general views as seen in Table 5 did remain consistent. Regardless of the form of data being used, the participants primarily remained consistent with their definitions of discussion and how they viewed its incorporation in the classroom. While participants were not asked to redefine discussion toward the end of the semester, there did not appear to be any drastic changes in their ideas toward this complex pedagogical approach.

**Finding Two: Planning for Discussion**

An interesting theme that continued to appear throughout data collection was that of participants believing discussion needed to be “planned” in order to be successful in the classroom. Participants consistently alluded to the fact that discussion could be made safer and more effective if both the teacher and students in a classroom were made away of an upcoming discussion several days in advance. This, the participants seemed to say,
would give time for students to find sources and collect their thoughts and it would give teachers time to learn about the topic and plan for a discussion that would be effective. Discussion, therefore, appeared to serve as a component of a lesson where parameters were decided upon before class and students were given ample time to collect sources and develop arguments.

The majority of the participants noted how discussion was a strategy that could easily lead itself to students misbehaving or going too far away from the content being focused on in class. Kathleen, for instance, claimed, “students also need time to prepare for discussion. Their contributions to a discussion should be well thought out and researched” (In-Class Written Reflection, October 14, 2014). Much like the other participants, Kathleen saw discussion as having the most potential for success and collaboration when students were made aware of the discussion’s parameters prior to the class in which the discussion would take place. Spontaneity, therefore, was not seen as a critical component to an effective discussion.

Most of the participants viewed discussion like this, as an isolated practice that should primarily occur at scheduled times and on planned topics where the teacher could maintain a sense of control both on the content being taught and the strategy for its incorporation. Fran, like Kathleen, was presented with the question of whether she would use discussion in her classroom and the extent to which discussion is worth the trouble it may cause in terms of student behavior and time constraints. Her response is as follows:

I think it’s worth it if you prepare in the right… which [Hess] talks about in the article with the four characteristics of why discussions fail. And if you
know the shortcomings and you prepare for it and you have the students prepare for it, but I think that’s worthwhile. And I don’t think you can just – well, I think you can, - but I think the best kind of discussion would be from you being prepared and the students being just as prepared. (Fran, In-Class Comment, October 14, 2014)

Adriana, similarly, reflected on the need for prep-work by describing a course she had taken in college in which students were required to bring in five ideas to discuss (and, potentially, debate) with one another every Friday:

It does require prep work … Like I took a class at [in college] where we’d come in – and we’d know the topic ahead of time and we’d come in and with five points for it and five points against it… it’s basically, you would come in basically being able to argue either side with the background knowledge… (October 14, 2014)

Likewise, Sydney described an intention for preparing students to have discussions every Monday by saying the following:

I think if I would do it I’d set up a lot of “set up” for it. So I’d say on Friday that we’re “going to have this discussion on Monday” so I’d have them prepare this argument, then they’d do some research so they are not just showing up with whatever their mom told them. So yeah, they would definitely know far in advance. (Sydney, In-Class Comment, October 14, 2014)
This finding was also frequently seen throughout the lesson and unit plans of the preservice teachers. In their junior-level social studies methods course, for instance, participants had to develop a lesson plan that they could potentially use within the classroom. Erin began her lesson by specifically allotting five minutes to a classroom discussion on whether the Confederacy should have been punished by the Union after the Civil War. Fran similarly planned to start class with a “warm up activity” which involved showing students a collection of photos from the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II and “Allow students to express what they wrote” (Fran, Junior Level Social Studies Methods Lesson Plan, Fall 2013). And, as noted earlier in Adriana’s individual case report, she specifically noted that students of her lesson on the Bill of Rights would have 20 minutes for a “Class discussion about what amendments each group chose to ratify and why.” (Adriana, Junior Level Social Studies Methods Lesson Plan, Fall 2013). In each of these three examples, it was clear that the participants saw discussion as something they could both fit into a specific amount of time (5 minutes, 5 minutes, and 20 minutes, respectively) and something they should plan for in order for success.

Returning to Erin’s lesson plan that was constructed with a partner in her senior-level methods course in the fall of 2014, Erin and her partner even went so far as to create a lengthy list of questions to ask students about the activity they had just completed regarding non-whites, employment, and possible workplace discrimination. Directly after noting that they would spend 15 minutes, the following questions were listed in their lesson plan:
How were you affected throughout the summer? What could you afford or not afford to do? Did you group members have similar experiences to you? Is it fair that some groups were not equally affected by the different situations of the summer? How do we see this play out in society today? Do you feel that certain minority groups may be affected differently than others? How does this compare to what blacks and other minorities experienced before and during the Civil Rights Movement? Do you feel it has improved today? How may a person’s economic power relate to political power? (Erin and Partner, Lesson Plan, Senior Level Social Studies Methods, fall 2014)

These questions emphasize an interest in maintaining control not only of how the discussion occurs, but also the questions that are asked and discussed by students. Though there existed no comments of how the discussion would be structured (e.g., whether the teacher would deviate from these prompts), the notion of having so many questions prepared for students demonstrates the idea that a discussion must have parameters in order for it to stay within the control of the educator.

It should be noted that the purpose of describing this finding is not to argue against planning for discussion. There exists a clear advantage to being prepared for any classroom situation and planning as a teacher is often critical to effective teaching. Because of this, the purpose of pointing out the extent to which the participants emphasized planned discussions over spontaneous ones is to emphasize both the participants’ fear of what could happen and their emphasis on control as the teacher.
Finding Three: Discussion’s Value in the Classroom

The first essential finding seen within the cross-case analysis sought to answer the research question detailing how preservice social studies teachers conceptualize discussion as a pedagogical practice. As seen throughout the individual case reports, the six participants rarely connected principles of democratic education (and social justice, specifically) with the use of discussion. However, the participants did all emphasize the need for discussion in the social studies classroom. Though each participant varied in a multitude of ways in terms of their visions of education and discussion, there existed clear consensus amongst the participants that discussion was critical to an effective social studies classroom. The most basic demonstration of this fact occurred on October 14, 2014 when the 10 preservice secondary social studies teachers were asked in their senior social studies methods course to respond to an open-ended prompt questions asking whether discussion is “worth the trouble” for teachers. Of the six participants who took part in the current study, all six responded positively to the question by expressing the inherent value of discussion within the social studies in terms of democratic education and student growth.

Whether considering Sydney’s vision of discussion being used as a way to teach through a global perspective, Michael’s intention of using discussion to integrate controversial issues, or Kathleen’s aim of teaching students to simply express themselves in a rational and eloquent manner, the data demonstrated a crucial finding in that each participant described the purposes of using discussion in the social studies classroom differently. This is not to say that there was not some overlap in how the participants
defined and conceptualized discussion. The participants all mentioned that discussion includes the incorporation of various perspectives and interpretations of content as well as allows for students to learn how to voice their own opinion. In this sense, their foundational understandings of what discussion is and can be were often quite similar. However, the primary purposes of using discussion described by each participant often varied based on the participants’ beliefs, experiences, and understandings of democratic education.

Adriana, for instance, was asked after her initial interview in the fall of 2014 to generate a written response describing how she envisioned herself as a social studies teacher two years into the future. Like many of the other participants, Adriana noted that she wanted to be an engaging educator who used student-centered approaches to make the content more meaningful and relevant to her students. In her own words, Adriana claimed, “I’d like to take a very active role and have the students … I want some way of knowing the students are actually paying attention and learning and not just regurgitating things” (Initial Interview, August 20, 2014). Though she did not explicitly mention discussion in this response, she did do so in her responses to the set of reflection questions provided directly after this interview. Adriana claimed in these responses that she would try to use discussion because she “believes methods like discussion are immensely valuable to the education process” (Written Reflection, September 2, 2014).

When asked the same prompt question regarding how she envisioned herself as a teacher two years after graduating, Fran claimed she imagined herself using “discussion and engaging lecture. While my classroom will have its fair share of activities, for the
most part the day-to-day look of my classroom will be a discussion-based lecture” (September 5, 2014). Much like Adriana’s comment on the value of discussion, Fran’s statement that she envisioned her daily classroom using some form of discussion reflects the value she places on discussion as a pedagogical practice that is essential to “good” social studies. In other words, both Adriana and Fran noted that discussion is essential to effective social studies. However, Fran claimed she wanted to use it on a daily basis throughout her lectures while Adriana planned on using it more sporadically based on the content being covered in class.

Michael was also very adamant when describing the importance of discussion, noting that it is a “classroom strategy that not only strengthens students’ understanding of the material, but also promotes the skills of communication and acceptance of diverse opinions” (Final Teaching Philosophy, Junior Level Social Studies Methods). When asked by the assistant professor of senior-level social studies methods about the value of discussion, he noted that developing the ability to participate in discussion is “something you can take into the real world” (In-Class Comment, October 14, 2014). This was also reflected in his simple statement that he “liked [the] classwide [sic] discussion” that occurred when he saw the Best Practices video for the first time (September 9, 2014). Collectively, Michael’s vision of discussion is one that is incredibly positive, but neither fully defined or justified. Rather, his beliefs and conceptions about using discussion – like several of the other participants - appear to be continuously evolving based on new experiences in the classroom and throughout his own coursework.
Kathleen, similarly, described the inherent value in using discussion and emphasized her interest in using it as a teacher. After having seen the Best Practices video for the second time, Kathleen noted on the questionnaire provided to her that “I definitely want[s] to include discussion in my classroom” (Written Reflection on Best Practices Video, December 8, 2014). Though, it should be noted, Kathleen also remarked that she would do so in a different manner than the teacher in the video, claiming, “I would set the students up differently and have the questions be more focused” (Written Reflection on Best Practices Video, December 8, 2014). As will be described in the following section which details the participant’s visions of discussion, Kathleen was similar to Fran, Adriana, and Michael in that she wanted to use discussion, but she also had different conceptions of what it was, how often it should be used, and its true benefit for students in a k12 classroom.

Regardless of how the approach was framed in terms of its feasibility or structure, the use of discussion was always described as a vital component to effective social studies education. This idea of discussion being important was consistently seen within the data, where words such as “worthwhile”, “essential”, and “critical” were used to describe the place of discussion in the social studies classroom. The value participants’ placed in using discussion was also seen throughout their lessons and unit plans. Kathleen and Sydney, for instance, worked together on their lesson plan for the senior level methods course. Throughout their lesson was a heavy emphasis on using discussion. The lesson began with students listing several causes of the Civil War in Rwanda and following this by a “short discussion” in which students “list[ed] some common terms”.

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Students followed this introductory question with several activities in which the purpose was to get them to share understandings of the crisis to see how everyone interprets the issue differently. The hope, Sydney and Kathleen wrote, “is that many different students will adamantly defend their terms as being key factors [to the Civil War]” (Sydney and Kathleen, Lesson Plan, Senior Level Social Studies Methods). Though not explicitly stated, the assumption is that Sydney and Kathleen sough to engage students in a form of discussion when they are asked “adamantly defend” their own beliefs. If one student believes the states’ rights were the primary cause of the Civil War, another student can try to engage them in discourse to support this theory. It is unclear whether this was meant to be structured as a competitive debate or not, but it does lend itself to one of many forms of collaboration involving the exchanging of ideas and the defending of one’s beliefs.

Similarly, Erin and her partner (a non-participant who allowed her group lesson plan to be collected for this study) allotted 15 minutes in their lesson for a discussion about an activity on how non-whites face discrimination in the work place (specifically in the form of wages). Erin and her partner planned on conducting a lesson in which students were placed in groups and given an identity to work as throughout the class (i.e., role playing). Following the simulation, students were asked to discuss the activity using an array of prompt questions. Again, Erin and her partner – as well as Kathleen and Sydney – were never prompted to use discussion in their lesson plans (aside from within their own courses and accompanying class readings). They did so because of an understanding of its value to students of their classes.
Finding Four: Though Advocated, Discussion Rarely Practiced

The participants in this study rarely incorporated the types of discussion advocated for in the research into their own pedagogy when they were observed. Returning to the previously mentioned figures from Nystrand et al. (1997), this study has shown that teachers' use of discussion is infrequent and often ineffective. Of the fifteen conducted observations, the participants either misunderstood what discussion actually was or were reluctant to use the very strategy that they spoke so highly. In this sense (and though falling outside the scope of the present study), the oft-referenced (though arguable) dichotomy between theory and practice became a factor in determining the level of “socialization” occurring in the classroom and the extent to which participants brought coursework into their field placement. This was seen in several comments having been previously mentioned in this study. For instance, Erin mentioned how she felt her course readings were framed around “idealistic settings that don’t include state standards” (In-Class Written Reflection, September 30, 2014). Kathleen similarly noted a common concern of future teachers by noting “half of [my CTs] students are so bored” in regards to her inability to engage the students (Erin, Conclusion Interview, December 8, 2014).

Again, it should be noted that the socialization (or “washing out”) of their university training is outside of the scope of this study, but it is important to consider how the experiences of watching veteran teachers in an actual K12 classroom impacted the participants’ views of discussion and the practice of teaching the social studies. Because the majority of the participants’ cooperating teachers used lecture-based approaches
while teaching themselves (this solely noted through conversations with the participants),
the extent to which the participants’ teaching strategies were impacted by these
traditional approaches cannot be fully ignored, as they likely did play a role in how the
participants taught while being observed or how they viewed the field of education.

This is not to say, however, that discussion did not ever enter into the classroom
of the participants. Sydney, for instance, worked to incorporate various forms of *debate*
into her teaching when she asked individual students to create an argument and defend it
against her. And though this fell more under the guise of “debate” than “discussion”, it
did demonstrate her interest in getting students to collaborate to formulate an argument.
Sydney made a clear and concerted effort to use student-centered approaches while she
was teaching. Often while teaching, Sydney would ask students open-ended question to
either get the perspectives of other members of the classroom or simply to maintain high
levels of engagement by calling on students at random.

Similar to Sydney, Michael attempted a more collective debate during his second
observation in which he had students stand across from one another and argue the merits
of realism and romanticism within literature as a way to foster higher levels of
engagement. As described earlier within his individual case report, Michael sought to
encourage debate by having students get out of their seat and formulate an argument to
convince others to join their “side” of the classroom. Shortly after this activity had
occurred, Michael was asked what pedagogical approach he had used to teach that day, to
which he immediately responded with “discussion” and “think-pair-share”. Michael,
therefore, described his teaching as being grounded in collaborative efforts where
students were speaking with one another and exchanging views and dispositions.

Though both of these lessons were effective in their own right, they are interesting
to the current research because both Michael and Sydney referred to each activity as a
“discussion” in their post-observation interviews. Despite this, however, each lesson
involved a sense of competition above a purpose of collaboration. For Sydney’s lesson,
students had to “win” an argument with her (as she served as the government) to gain
some form of benefit. Michael’s students competed to win over those with contrasting
beliefs about realism and romanticism. Although the attempts to have students converse
among themselves did occur, it was rarely in the form of a discussion in which growth
and collaboration is given more attention than competition.

This was further seen on October 14, 2014 when the participants enrolled in the
senior-level social studies methods course spoke about the use of discussion in the social
studies classroom. Sydney, responding to the question of discussion being worth the
trouble, expressed to her peers that:

It’s fun to have kids to form an argument and go against other arguments

and it’s also important to force them to debate with things they don’t

necessarily agree with. And they’ll often be like “well, I don’t want to
debate that, it’s not what I believe”… then set aside a belief that is probably
super strong and play devil’s advocate and think outside of their box. (In-
Class Comment, October 14, 2014).
Here, Sydney is mirroring the frequent sentiment expressed by the participants of this study by noting how students need to participate in group-talk if, for no other reason, to better understand viewpoints other than their own. In other words, when asked about the purpose of discussion, she described her experiences and expectations for using debate. While these two practices do overlap at times (and one could certainly make the argument that debate is a component of discussion or that debate is a more structured version of discussion), they are rarely interchangeable. In this sense, I am not disassociating debate and discussion, but, rather, acknowledging their differences in terms of classroom practice. Therefore, it is important to note that often times Sydney was using debate while being observed as opposed to discussion.

Furthermore, all six participants continuously wrote and spoke about the use of discussion in a positive manner, but mostly did not use it as an instructional strategy when they were being observed throughout the course of the semester. In other words, the participants often planned to use discussion as seen in previously constructed lesson plans and interviews; however, their planning for discussions often did not run parallel to their actual practice of using discussion. A key finding, therefore, was that their planning often was separate from their implementation of any form of group-talk. What they wrote down and spoke about prior to entering into the classroom (i.e., their intentions) was often not the same as their actual pedagogical practices. The participant’s practices, therefore, often contradicted the beliefs they noted within their planning. This could be for a variety of reasons including the participants’ comfort level in front of a class of
students, the requirements placed upon them by their cooperating teachers, or a simple sudden change in heart for how they wanted to teach their lessons. Regardless of the reasons, what was clear was that the intentions and plans made by the participants greatly differed from the lessons that were observed throughout data collection.

When they participants did use conversation in the classroom, such activities often were grounded in competition than they were collaboration. If the true definition of a discussion is to promote growth through the exchanging of ideas and beliefs, then the extent to which a competitive debate is a true discussion is, in itself, debatable. This is not to see that competition is not a effective form of conversation that leads to intellectual growth, as often having one’s ideas challenged can lead to a previously unreachable level of critical thinking. However, the idea of competing to “win” falls outside of the scope of this study’s definition of a discussion (which is meant to be grounded in collaboration).

It should be noted here, though, that a limitation to the current study (as described in chapter three) is that the extent to which the cooperating teachers of the participants impacted the approaches used was never truly known. Though I have tried to speculate about this throughout the individual case reports, there was no definitive way of discovering how the participants would have taught had they had different cooperating teachers (or a classroom of their own in which they could feel free to experience with any pedagogical approach).

Similarly, it is also important to note at the end of any finding describing the pedagogical approaches used by the participants that this is not to make any predictions for the kinds of teachers they will become or the strategies that they will use in the
classroom. This research, in other words, is meant to explore what the participants did, not to predict what they were going to do upon entering into the classroom as either a student teacher or a practicing, in-service teacher. For that matter, factors including where the participants teach, for how long they teach, and the extent to which their views change will all impact their approaches to teaching. This finding, therefore, applies strictly to the ways in which the participants taught the semester prior to entering into their student teaching placements.

**Finding Five: Discussion For Citizenship, Not Social Justice**

As the collection of data continued, it became clear that the participants often failed to connect practices of discussion in the social studies classroom with principles of social justice regarding race, gender, religion, sexual orientation and other critical areas of the social studies. Multiple times throughout the course of the semester participants were presented with prompts that could have lead to a discussion on historically marginalized groups or individuals whose voices have been removed from a dominant narrative. Yet, rarely did students connect the use of discussion with these principles. Instead they often focused their associations on the development of citizens who participated in politics. For the most part, participants situated the purposes of democratic education and the school system as a whole with ideas of “creating democratic citizens” (Fran, In-Class, Written Reflection, August 26, 2014) and “mak[ing] sure society keeps getting better” (Sydney, Junior-Level Social Studies Methods Interview, September 23, 2013).
Prior to delving into this finding, it should be mentioned that participants did make references to issues of social justice (primarily focused on race) throughout the data collection phase (as seen within the individual case reports). However, such references were few and far between when it came to the use of discussion in the social studies classroom. These references were often made in regards to the purposes of education, broadly, or the social studies as a content-area. Despite several isolated mentions of social justice (which will be detailed in the current section), the participants largely fell short of connecting the practice of discussion with broad principles of diversity underlying the field of social studies education. Such a finding was reflective of many of the studies presented in the literature review of the current manuscript, it that the preservice teachers who participated in this study had an unclear picture of both democratic education and the aims of the National Council for the Social Studies (e.g., Crowe, Hawley & Brooks; Dumas, 2003; Mathews & Dilworth, 2008)

For instance, on the day in which the assistant professor of the senior-level social studies methods course asked all of the students in the course (including the six participants) how discussion connects to all of the “educational jargon” spoken within their program, the answers participants gave primarily emphasized citizenship education (tied to practice of being a citizen such as voting, following the news, and engaging in discussions on current events) and, more specifically, communication skills. The responses heavily reflected Nie et al.’s (1996) dichotomy between political engagement and democratic enlightenment, with the responses heavily leaning toward the former. Fran noted that discussion and education fit together in the following manner:
The skills of communicating effectively is [sic] a skill they can improve upon through discussion. You’ll say you’re opinion if your debating and someone may try to refute what you’re saying and then you’re like “well, that’s not exactly what I meant”… so you are able to redefine … and they redefine their opinions and say “oh, I didn’t think of that point of view” and work that into their opinion and entertain the idea of other opinions without accepting them as fact… the mark of an intelligent mind according to Aristotle. (Fran, In Class Response, October 14, 2014)

While Fran focused on the use of discussion as a way to place value on every student’s voice in the classroom and learn how to construct an opinion based on the ability to listen to and critique others, Sydney answered the question by emphasizing an individual’s ability to create logical arguments based on facts and, subsequently, presenting these facts in a persuasive manner:

You learn how to communicate your thoughts to people. Even if they’re not historians, they are still going to have to communicate their thoughts to people and… um…. to make it persuasive and use logic in their argument and stuff. (In-Class Response, October 14, 2014)

Kathleen, similarly, noted that discussion helped people when it came to “expressing your thing. Your opinions in a, like, coherent way” (In-class response, October, 14 2014).

Both Kathleen and Sydney emphasized using discussion to support an individual’s ability to form well-reasoned opinions and defend them in a rigorous conversation. However, they, much like the other participants, did not make a solid connection on that day (as
well as throughout data collection) with critical principles of education that encourage reform-oriented teaching.

  Taking a more practical approach to discussion, Michael focused his comments during the discussion on both the feasibility of discussion and its use in relation to engaging students in coursework. Michael claimed that developing the ability to participate in discussion was something that could be taken into the real world and, further, would help someone when engaging in conversation with an informed citizen. His vision of democratic education and discussion, like that of Kathleen, Fran and Sydney, was framed around being an educated citizen without any real mention of tolerance or reform-oriented action. This is despite the fact that Michael – nor any of the other participants – were ever asked specifically about citizenship education. Each and every prompt given to them was purposefully framed around democratic education. There is, it should be noted, nothing inherently wrong with this line of thinking. It simply bears mentioning that it does not necessarily align itself with principles of equality and equity as seen through a critical lens. Further, when they did describe citizenship education, they often used in synonymously with democratic education.

  Though it falls outside of the scope of this study, the broad understanding each participant had toward democratic education merits attention. Fran described democratic education in her initial interview as running directly parallel with principles of citizenship education. She did not see citizenship education as a component to democratic education. Rather, she appeared to see them as similar in value. In her initial interview, Fran noted that,
Democratic education to me is just kind of... like I kind of hinted at means preparing students to be functioning citizens in our democratic society. So preparing them to be informed voters, teaching them to have the analytical skills to inform opinions on campaign issues if they are voting for president or something (August 20, 2014).

Again, this quote demonstrates a focus on creating citizens who are capable of making informed decisions regarding strictly political issues. Though one could make an argument that they have ties to race (e.g., voting on an issue that benefits a marginalized group), the participants rarely made mention of such issues when describing democratic or citizenship education. Perhaps this is a reason as to why the majority of participants associated discussion with citizenship education as opposed to broader themes within democratic education.

Despite the consistent focus on citizenship education as a justification for using discussion in the social studies classroom, it should be noted there were isolated examples of data from several participants that connected discussion with issues of social justice. In other words, no participant fully embraced social justice in their data, but there were examples scattered throughout data collection that referred to equality and equity. Kathleen, for instance, made an interesting comment regarding her methods course and issues of race during her conclusion interview. When asked about her vision of democratic education, she remarked:

I think probably one of the things I’ve taken from the courses this semester is that you should talk to kids about I don’t know... the problems in our society
so like race is obviously a big one that we discuss. And I don’t think I have a clear understanding of how I want to do that, but I do want to do that … and I think that’s important to do and in democratic education as well! (Conclusion Interview, December 8, 2014)

Though Kathleen’s comment never fully connects the use of discussion to prominent critical theories of education ranging from gender, race, religion, and sexual orientation (save for, perhaps, her mention of race), it does demonstrate a rudimentary understanding of the role the classroom plays with introducing students to current and critical issues.

Kathleen’s comment should be analyzed through semantics as well. When Kathleen notes that teachers should “talk to kids” about issues such as race, it is important to consider she meant by this. While the current collection of data does not answer this question, she may have been describing a teacher’s role to start a conversation with students regarding topics of race, or it may mean a traditional introduction of a topic through one of several other instructional strategies (if even being incorporated in an effective manner). It is hard to truly decipher the meaning behind Kathleen’s comment. However, the comment seems to demonstrate potential for an association to be made between the use of discussion and prominent theories in the field of education revolving around race, gender, religion, and sexual orientation.

Adriana made little mention of social justice throughout the course of the semester and when she did, it was rarely connected to specific practices of discussion. On the first day of senior-level social studies methods in the fall of 2014, Adriana was asked to write about the ethos of the social studies. Her response – though primarily grounded in citizenship education – did note, “There are dozens of sides to every story and numerous ways to interpret historical
events” (In-Class Writing Prompt, August 26, 2014). Though not directly tied to discussion nor fleshed out with more detail, this comment does demonstrate a foundational connection to the social studies and historically marginalized groups.

The amount of data collected on the participants’ conceptions of discussion cannot be understated. For well over four months, an array of data was collected on a consistent basis. And throughout all of this data, rarely did examples occur where discussion is noted as a specific strategy for overturning the status quo or improving the conditions of historically marginalized groups. Rather, such comments occurred in isolated moments that were not tied to a larger picture of education as a means for social reform.
CHAPTER SIX: Conclusions and Implications

The present research study initially set out to discover the associations that preservice social studies teachers make between discussion as a pedagogical approach and broad theories of democratic education. However, the findings led this research to discover several issues within teacher education that go beyond the use of discussion in the social studies classroom. The results prove that preservice social studies teachers often are only capable of presenting vague and surface-level understandings of democratic education and that they rarely associated such principles to historically marginalized voices tied to race, gender, religion, and ethnicity. Instead, their views on democratic education often ground themselves in notions of citizenship including—though not limited to—voting, speaking one’s own opinion, listening to the perspectives of others, following current issues, and participating in basic democratic processes.

Though the idea of citizenship education tied to practices of voting, petition, and following the news certainly has merit, many scholars such as Barton and McCully (2007), Hahn (1988), Hess (2004), and Parker (2005) noted within chapter two of this dissertation would argue that it is not enough to promote the idea of a truly democratic society (e.g., Banks, Freiré, Ladson-Billings, Parker, Hess). As Nieto states, “differences in race, ethnicity, social class, language, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and exceptionality, among others, have all defined inequality in public education” (p. 44). Such a sentiment reflects the field of education’s responsibility to provide every student with the opportunity to seek out their own vision of “the Good Life” through equality and
equity. The present chapter seeks to curb this issue by presenting suggestions for future research within social studies education and teacher education.

**Rethinking Teacher Education Coursework**

An often-discussed topic within the field of teacher education is that of how to instill such a large body of knowledge and skills into preservice teachers within such a limited amount of time (Grossman, Hammerness & McDonald, 2009). Most preservice teachers, for that matter, are only formally part of a teacher education program for about two years. Prior to entering into the program, they are completing general education requirements and completing content-related courses within their specific content-area. Once accepted into a teacher education program, preservice teachers are expected to gain an array of skills and knowledge before entering into the field as in-service teachers. This is in addition to mastering the content that they will be expected to teach in one or more disciplines, building a resume through extracurricular activities to make themselves marketable, and maintain a social life during this critical point in their lives.

Teacher educators therefore, have the difficult task of teaching methods, critical theories, principles of education, and infusing multiple field experiences and their practical components into the already busy schedule of the traditional preservice teacher. This is a great deal of information for a preservice teacher to both understand and synthesize. And perhaps what they do understand may not be tied to a larger picture of effective education. It is understandable to see how preservice teachers could struggle to connect everything they are expected to have learned in two years to complex principles and initiatives in education. Sydney, for that matter, even noted early in her senior level
methods course that she struggled to truly grasp the content she was learning in a manner that would allow her to incorporate it into her teaching by saying that “parts of this class, and all my education classes right now, are a bit overwhelming. I am learning a lot of theories, and I just don't have the teaching experience to fully understand them.” (In-Class Reflection, September 30, 2014). Here, Sydney seems to be demonstrating what many of the participants felt about how much each preservice teacher was expected to learn before graduating. Sydney’s quote, in other words, reflects a preservice teacher who is struggling to learn about a variety of pedagogical approaches, a seemingly endless supply of theories, a number of initiatives (e.g., Common CORE, Student Learning Outcomes, State-Provided Standards, technological developments) as well as simply how to manage a classroom.

It is critical, therefore, that teacher education strives to create the most cohesive program experience as possible in order to effectively incorporate various methods and theories into the most powerful experience possible for preservice teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Zeichner and Gore, 1990). For instance, within the following research it became somewhat clear that most of the participants did recognize various “buzz words” within teacher education, but that they often failed to “connect the dots” on how such terms and ideas played into the grand ideal of the public school system in the United States. This could be for a variety of reasons, but it could be argued that the participants could have used more time within their teacher education program learning about the underlying goals of education and the ways to tie such aims into their own pedagogy. Citing an array of empirical research, Darling-Hammond et al., (2005) note,
“programs that are largely a collection of unrelated courses without a common conception of teaching and learning have been found to be relatively feeble change agents for affecting practice among new teachers” (pp. 391-392). Because of this, teacher educators must continue to work toward a collective vision of teaching and learning that can be disseminated to preservice teachers throughout their entire preparation programs including coursework, field experiences, and additional requirements (e.g., memberships in organizations, volunteering with local schools and districts, creative inquiries, culminating portfolios).

In specific regards to democratic education, the participants in this study only had three courses (Principles of American Education, Junior-Level Social Studies Methods, and Senior Level Social Studies Methods) emphasizing approaches and concepts related to democratic education. This limited the opportunities the participants had to both understand democratic education and connect it to the practice of teaching the social studies. These three courses, however, still made the context of this study intriguing, as having two methods courses specifically dedicated to one content-area is not typical for a teacher education program (Dumas, Evans, & Weible, 1997). With more coursework revolving around key principles in democratic education (and, specifically, the social studies) the participants may have been able to increase their depth of knowledge on such an abstract term and be more likely to understand the role such theories play in the classroom.
Rethinking How Preservice Teachers Understand Democratic Education

The participants in the present study often struggled to truly define democratic education outside of citizenship education. More specifically, the participants often described participatory citizenship as the foundation for democratic education. Participants viewed a “good” citizen as one who votes, follows the news, and finds other ways to participate in the democratic process, which, as noted in Erin’s individual case reports, reflects Nie et al.’s (1996) description of an political engaged as opposed to democratic enlightenment. Additionally, when asked to present definitions (or “visions”) of democratic education, the participants’ responses were consistently vague. Adriana, for example, was asked to describe her understanding of democratic education in her junior level social studies methods class in the fall of 2013. Her response was “so people can engage in a civil society and interact with people based on norms, and I think education helps with all of that. And just so we have an intelligent population, cause that’s really important to a democracy.” Though there certainly is merit in this statement and it does reflect a foundational understanding of why a school system exists, it lacks several critical components to a completed definition of democratic education. As has been stated throughout this study, Adriana’s statement made no mention of social justice, reform-oriented citizenry, or global citizenship. Like the other participants in the study, Adriana’s definition focuses on citizenship education and participatory citizenship above principles of equality and equity.

A year after this response, Adriana was asked the same question about her views toward democratic education in her senior level social studies methods course. After
reading to Adriana her original response, which read “giving students the tools and providing them with the skills to be active participants in the society we live in”, I asked if she could expand upon this statement, she explained the following:

I think it’s kind of focusing on skills rather than content. All the classes I’ve been into, it’s all just content and teaching you to memorize facts but I guess this past couple of years I’ve reworded it to “your students should leave with skills. They don’t need to know dates, they need to know how historical things effect them on a day to day situation and social studies has a really big hand in that. (Adriana, Conclusion Interview, December 10, 2014)

Again, this comment does hold some weight in terms of the broad aims of education (and the social studies, specifically), but it is lacking in its breath and depth and reflects a limited understanding of a definition that she had been introduced to for upwards of three years and at least four classes in her teacher education program. Further, Adriana’s understanding of democratic education begs the question of how teacher educators can expect preservice teachers to incorporate any principles of democratic education into their teaching when their understanding of the term is relatively foundational in nature.

This finding – albeit disheartening – was not surprising given previous research conducted on preservice teachers’ understandings of the field of education. There exists an array of studies (e.g., Doppen, 2007; Dumas, 2003; Marshall, 2004, Mathews & Dilworth, 2008) that detail the vague understandings preservice teachers have about broad fields in education and how social justice is rarely placed at the foundation of
preservice teachers’ visions of effective education. The present research further proves that teacher education programs need to assist preservice teachers in constructing understandings on the field of education that go beyond simple memorization of “buzz words” and ideas. Teacher education needs to ensure that preservice teachers graduate with a strong understanding of what democratic education is, ways in which principles of democratic education can be implemented into the classroom, and an urge to continue developing as reform-oriented educators. Moreover, in order for preservice teachers to truly believe in key principles of democratic education, they must develop an understanding of what it truly is and how it can be used through its inclusion in multiple teacher education courses with an array of professors.

Perhaps a portion of the reason that the participants failed to connect principles of democratic education with the use of discussion in the social studies classroom was due to their limited understanding of what both discussion democratic education actually are and all of the components that it is comprised of. If the participants had a clearer understanding of such a broad term (and one that they have cultivated over several years of readings and conversations with instructors and peers), maybe their understandings of how discussion and democratic education are connected would have been pronounced throughout the data.

Though this could take many forms, teacher education could better provide preservice teachers with opportunities for enacting mock-lessons in their courses and then collectively reflecting on such lessons to find how the lessons did (or did not) connect to principles of democratic education. Framing democratic education around “mini-lessons”
would add a practical component to preservice teachers’ experiences with democratic education. Rather than simply learning about and discussing the term, they could then attempt to place the term within the context of an actual teaching experience done with peers and an expert on the topic of democratic education (the professor).

Future research, for that matter, should look into ways in which teacher education programs can most effectively cultivate broad and all-encompassing definitions of democratic education in preservice teachers. Such research can and should expand upon the current literature on how methods such as teaching rationales help preservice teachers reflect upon both their pedagogy and prominent theories in social studies education. Research must look into how teacher education programs can create a cohesive experience for students where their definitions evolve based on each new experience in the program (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005).

Scholars also should look into how field placements – and the diversity that may or may not be present in partner schools – impacts how preservice teachers consider diversity within their philosophies of education. Diverse schools (and the field placements that can occur within them) offer the rare opportunity for preservice teachers to observe and evaluate seasoned teachers in a way where they can reflect on the theoretical foundations of their coursework as well as the practical components to teaching. Erin even went so far as to note how this would be beneficial by claiming the following:

Sometimes I feel like what I read about is idealistic settings. They do not mention school requirements, state requirements, etc. I think it would be
beneficial to understand certain strategies on or steps for how to do this, if possible. It may also be beneficial to look at some examples of classes that have to follow standards for state/national assessment tests to see how teachers balance all of this. (In-Class Written Reflection, September 30, 2014)

Here, Erin is demonstrating how a dichotomy between what she learns in her own coursework and what she has seen and experienced within her field experiences. Though the argument could be made that the field experiences that occur in teacher education programs are opportunities for students to “see how teachers balance all of this”, perhaps an additional strategy would be more interaction between the field of teacher education and in-service teachers who have been unanimously viewed as “successful teachers” in all areas of the field. Whether these exist within the parameters of a university’s neighboring districts or whether they must be read about and watched through video depends on the school. But offering preservice teachers the opportunity to truly see theory and practice become merged within their coursework would likely benefit their own expectations and beliefs.

**Redefining Diversity Within Teacher Education**

Scholars in the field of education (and, specifically, social studies education) often promote a vision of a classroom where social inequalities are fixed through reform-oriented education (Bickmore, 2008). To do this, many teacher education programs – including the one in which the current study took place – emphasize the need for preservice teachers to both recognize the diversity inherent in every classroom and use it
participants often did recognize the value of seeing the diversity within their classroom. Multiple comments made by participants acknowledged bringing every student’s voice into the classroom through various forms of group-talk. However, participants stopped short at defining diversity beyond basic ideas of “every student having a different view” or “students of different learning abilities.” It was rare that a participant defined diversity through the lens of people from different religions, experiences, races, or one of many other biological or cultural factors, even despite having an entire unit and lesson plan assigned in the fall of 2014 that was to be based on an historically marginalized group. This is not something new, as “a major goal of the multicultural focus of many teacher education programs is to better prepare a mostly White and female teaching force to work effectively with students racial/cultural backgrounds different than their own” (Garmon, 2004, p. 201). Garmon’s vision is interesting, as it reflects both the demographics of the participants within the current study (5 white females, 1 white male) as well as their understandings of multicultural education.

If teacher education is truly seeking to create reform-oriented educators who teach for social change (as opposed to “tolerance”), teacher education needs to promote a vision of diversity grounded in more than learning abilities and previous experiences (Nieto, 2000). Rather, it must include notions of race, gender, religion, and culture to prepare students to truly enter into our pluralistic society. As noted by Banks (2001), “an assimilationist conception of citizenship will not be effective in the 21st century” (p. 7). Preservice teachers need to be trained to understand the social inequities that consistently
occur within historically marginalized groups and curb these issues through teaching
meant to promote a true vision of equality that does not promote assimilation to a single
cultural perspective (Banks, 2001; Barry & Lechner, 1995; Nieto, 2000). This ideal needs
to occur outside of just the social studies. Such inequalities need to serve as the
cornerstone of truly reform-oriented programs both within their conceptual frameworks
as well as their general education requirements. As noted by Nieto (2000):

Teacher education programs have a critical role to play in pushing the agenda
for social justice and equity in our nation’s schools. They can do so by offering
teachers and prospective teachers courses and other experiences that focus on
questions of equity and diversity that challenge deficit notions about the
capabilities of studies in diverse backgrounds. (p. 186)

Perhaps if preservice teachers were made more aware of how diversity includes
issues of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and other traits, they would be more
likely to emphasis the role of these components in an ideal vision of democratic
education that emphasizes principles of social justice (Banks, 2001). As noted by Causey
et al. (1999), “A well-articulated program with attention to diversity issues over several
semesters offers the best hope for moving preservice teachers toward greater cultural
sensitivity and knowledge and toward strength and effectiveness in culturally diverse
classrooms” (p. 43). If this were to happen, preservice teachers may have a better chance
of understanding how discussion can be used to bring various forms of discussion into the
classroom as a means to curb stereotypes and include a range of diversity into the social
studies. More specifically, the ideal being that instilling a stronger understanding of
democratic education within preservice teachers may assist them in naturally finding a connection between democratic education and the use of discussion beyond citizenship education.

Rethinking Discussion’s Place Within the Classroom

As detailed in the previous chapter, the participants in the study almost exclusively noted that – in order for a discussion to be successful - it must be planned for in advance. In other words, the participants defined discussion as an approach that a teacher should make time to include when creating lesson plans and introducing content. Students and teachers, therefore, must be provided with ample time to truly generate their thoughts and strategies prior to engaging in a classroom discussion. Essentially, the overarching theme within this finding was that an effective discussion could most likely occur when students and teachers could prepare by finding sources, fleshing out ideas, and deciding upon approaches for discussion. The participants, for that matter, noted that an effective discussion would be most likely when all of the students and the teachers in the classroom were prepared to actively engage in a discussion.

Though there is nothing inherently wrong with this view toward discussion being a planned and carefully implemented teaching strategy, it lends itself to various problems regarding the development of a true “miniature community” in the classroom. For that matter, the freedom that stems from a natural discussion can easily become sacrificed when students are told when to collaborate and what content is considered appropriate for dialogue. Within the public sphere, citizens are [ideally] not told when to discuss current issues, who to discuss them with, and what content they should be discussing. Rather, the
opportunity for discussion in a democracy is always readily available and can be approached whenever is most appropriate for those planning to engage in the discussion (Flynn, 2009; Hess, 2009; Grammes, 2010). Setting a precedent for students of any age that says a discussion must be formally planned in order for it to take place almost directly contrasts the idea that citizens should engage in discussions with peers in a spontaneous manner grounded in current issues and the generation of new facts (Flynn, 2009).

Such a limitation regarding when and how a discussion takes place in the classroom will prevent the inclusion of various topics relevant to student’s lives in addition to the exclusion of current and critical issues in society. At the point in which students are told what standard-based topics are appropriate to discuss and when a good time for doing so is, the classroom almost becomes counterproductive to the aims of a democratic education. Students are no longer exposed to a natural, free flowing discussion reflecting the types of conversation that contribute to the Habermas’s notion of the public sphere. With the proliferation of the accountability movement (and the subsequent generation of numerous content standards), teachers are more likely now to stay focused on content mandated by the state now more than ever. This is due at least in part to what Cornbleth (2002) refers to a “Competitive Climate” in which “the school atmosphere is dominated by student testing and public school ranking based on standardized, usually statewide test results” (p. 188). And with the rapid increase of merit-based pay across the United States, it is easy to understand how teachers could focus on test scores and standard-based content over abstract concepts and issues not
tested by the state and when discussions are used as a pedagogical strategy, they are grounded in topics that students will be tested on (e.g., “let’s discuss what the main reasons for the Civil War were?” or “Should the United States have dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?”). Each of these two questions are frequently placed within social studies standards and, therefore, considered “essential” to students’ knowledge of the social studies. Because of this, it easy to understand how teachers may place more importance or emphasis on such topics when attempting to have students participate in a discussion. Again, though these questions are important for students’ understanding of critical moments in the history of the United States of America, they fail to incorporate current issues that impact Americans on a daily basis.

Reflecting upon all of this, one conclusion that has been drawn from the current study is that preservice teachers must learn that discussion should not [and often cannot] be planned for in the classroom. When topics exist that are relevant to students’ lives and can be incorporated into the classroom as events continue to unfold, they certainly should be. As a practical example, numerous national and international events have occurred throughout the writing of the present section. In France, for instance, terrorists recently killed 17 innocent civilians either for working at a newspaper that prints satirical cartoons or, simply, for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Though the tragedy that occurred cannot be understated, such an incident is a teachable moment for students and one that is both timely in nature and cannot truly be planned for (at least not in terms of a long-range plan). Such an event, for that matter, will not be written into any formal set of standards in the next several years and, likely will not become key to any upcoming
textbook editions. However, this brutal act of terror should be incorporated into a social studies classroom because it is an international issue that impacts everyone in the world and their rights to a freedom of speech.

The tragedy that occurred at Charlie Hebdo – as tragic as it may be – is the definition of a “teachable moment”. It provides students the opportunity to learn about a current news story that – though removed from their own environment – does reflect many of the rights and privileges they are afforded by the first amendment of the Bill of Rights. Learning about this tragedy, in other words, provides students with a relevant issue that they can discuss with one another, their parents, and the rest of their community. In this sense, the public sphere referenced by Habermas extends into each and every classroom and should be used as a place where students dialogue about issues such as these acts of terror.

All of this is to not say that preparing students for a discussion or planning for one goes against the aims of education. Quite the opposite, as planning and preparation is often necessary to teach students how to engage in discussion with their peers in a manner that uses evidence and reasoning and allows for multiple perspectives (Flynn, 2009). However, when events such as the attacks at Charlie Hebdo occur, teachers would better serve their students if they use that moment to expose them to a discussion on a current issue where they can experience true citizenship without the formal parameters often placed upon them by a teacher planning for control.

It should be noted at this point that it is certainly impossible for a teacher to “plan” to teach every current and critical event that occurs in the world. Incidents like the
one that occurred at Charlie Hebdo cannot be formally planned for because it is impossible for anyone to know when such incidents will occur. Keeping this in mind, it is critical for educators to understand that they must have a “bag of tricks” at their disposal in which they can incorporate various current issues and events into their classroom as they happen. In other words, teachers must develop approaches to current and critical issues in which they can have students research topics as they happen. Doing so, ideally, will assist students in researching content, formulating opinions, and engaging with one another when it comes to world issues.

**Rethinking How Teacher Education Prepares Teachers for Discussion**

Avery (2003) recommends “social studies methods classes provide preservice teachers with many opportunities to practice methods that facilitate perspective-taking.” (p. 22) Though her suggestion is not specific to the use of discussion, Avery’s article is one of the few examples where teacher education is called on to better prepare preservice teachers to incorporate practical strategies for collaboration into their social studies classes. She continues by noting, “Preservice teachers should thus develop a repertoire of strategies for promoting perspective-taking. Dialog poems, role plays, public issues forums, and structured controversy represent a few of the methods or strategies that explicitly encourage perspective-taking” (p. 22). Avery, here, makes the case that facilitating any form of collaborative effort in the k12 classroom is not an inherent skill and that preservice teachers must have experiences not just in field experience, but also in their own coursework to truly be prepared to do so upon entering into the classroom.
Finally, Avery’s (2003) description of the role of teacher educators in preparing preservice teachers to promote meaningful social studies experiences is far too eloquent and relevant to the current study to not cite in full:

As teacher educators, we know that our student teachers will "listen" more to what we do than what we say. If we want the social studies teachers of the 21st century to be able to integrate technology into their instruction, as student teachers they must see us integrating (not demonstrating) technology into our courses. If we want future teachers to be more likely to conduct meaningful classroom discussions about controversial social and political issues than their predecessors, then our student teachers need to see us welcoming such discussions. And if we want teachers to be able to help their students take different perspectives, then we must model that skill when talking about current events as well as when reflecting on student teaching issues. (pp. 26-27)

Ultimately, what Avery is claiming is that teacher educators must model what we advocate for in our coursework. We cannot simply tell preservice teachers to use a strategy and consider a theory without doing so ourselves when we teach. Similarly, Parker and Hess (2001) call for a similar preparation of preservice teachers with a focus on learning how to facilitate a discussion:

We believe that teachers and teacher educators can do this by attending to what were summarized earlier as the “in” problem and the “about” problem: (a) providing students with ample opportunities to participate in discussions of texts
of all sorts and (b) helping them learn about this activity so that they can better participate in it and orchestrate it for their students planning discussions rather than bull sessions and distinguishing seminars from deliberations. (p. 286)

Reflecting the previous recommendations by Avery, Parker and Hess see the ability to facilitate various forms of group-talk as being contingent on having experiences practicing in an array of settings. The authors not that they, too, taught “for” discussion prior to noticing that they were more effective as teacher educators when beginning to teach “with” discussion (in a way in which they modeled the practice instead of simply describing it to their preservice teachers.

This form of modeling, however, should expand outside of a preservice teachers’ formal coursework and into the classes in which they are placed for this field experiences. Teacher education programs, therefore, should attempt to be selective (when it is feasible to do so) about the cooperating teachers they place preservice teachers with throughout their placements. Cooperating teachers must be willing to model effective, research-based forms of pedagogy which align with the mission of the field of education for preservice teachers in the same manner that teacher educators must incorporate such teaching into their own practices.

The current research supports the recommendations of Parker & Hess and Avery. Perhaps the reason the participants of the current study struggled to use discussion in their own practice (or truly understand how it was connected to several critical principles in the field of education) was due to the ways in which they were educated on how and why to use it in the classroom. Teacher education programs, therefore, should work to
provide preservice teachers both with practice using discussion in their coursework, but also emphasize modeling the approach while teaching so that preservice teachers can observe its implementation.

**Conclusion**

Though I did not identify myself as a critical theorist at the writing of the current study, I did provide participants with an array of opportunities to connect the use of discussion with the incorporation of marginalized groups and the voices of the individuals comprising such demographics. I did this by asking participants about the aims of education, the benefits to using discussion, the motivation for certain comments, or simply asking them to attempt to recall readings from their junior-level social studies methods course they had taken with me in the fall of 2013 that often were grounded in principles of social justice. Regardless of the method used, participants consistently had opportunities to associate discussion with principles of social justice within the current study’s data collection.

My goal, it should be noted, was never to lead participants to the point where they discussed critical theories. Again, I did not view myself as a critical theorist throughout this study and did not search specifically for participants’ associations to principles of equality and equity. Instead, I made notes of where these connections were made while initially coding the data and later assessed the extent to which I had to search in the data to find evidence of discussion being associated with social justice. Despite my efforts, however, the participants continually failed to make this connection. And though this finding was not one that was originally sought (nor even hypothesized upon), it became
one of those most critical findings of the study in that it demonstrated a dichotomy between the broad aims of social studies education such as education reform-oriented pedagogy, social justice, democratic education, and collective action (as seen at conferences and scholarly journals) and the views of various components of education such as discussion.

This lack of focus on social justice within the participants’ beliefs about education (even outside of the use of discussion) is concerning. Because “convincing research suggests that beliefs are the best predictors of individual behaviors and that educators’ beliefs influence their perceptions, judgments, and practices”, it is essential that the field of education creates a bridge between principles of multiculturalism and how they view the field of education (Brown, 2004, p. 332). If preservice teachers are not viewing their diverse student as all equal (or believing that they are), their treatments of and expectations for will continue to impact what occurs in the classroom (Causey, Thomas, Armento, 1999; Garmon, 2004; Middleton, 2002). Until this happens, it is difficult to imagine any situation where the majority of preservice teachers are capable of promoting a reform-oriented approach to teaching that uses discussion as a foundation for teaching social justice. Teacher education, therefore, must continue to work toward ensuring that preservice teachers develop a multicultural, reform-oriented perspective grounded in notions of social justice and both equity and equality.

It should be noted at this point that effective social studies is grounded in discussion throughout the majority of this dissertation. However, discussion is not the only means to an effective social studies classroom. Teachers must use various strategies
to engage students, incorporate multiple perspectives, and cover worthwhile content.

Discussion, therefore, is only one of several components to an ideal classroom experience. Because, however, discussion plays such an important role in collaboration and collective growth and can be used to improve the effectiveness of other approaches within the classroom, it is crucial that preservice teachers’ understandings of its use are clearly understood by teacher educators. This dissertation has sought to explore this relatively new area of study in hopes that it will assist teacher educators seeking to develop courses and program-wide curricula meant to ensure the development of reform-oriented educators.
References


APPENDIX
Teacher Education Program Conceptual Framework

- **Caring** comprises beliefs and actions.
  - **Beliefs**: Our candidates are committed to ethical and democratic dispositions including respecting the rights and responsibilities of all and recognizing diverse points of view.
  - **Actions**: Our candidates act in accord with the rights and responsibilities of all; are sensitive to developmental, social, and cultural differences; and encourage a democratic culture.

- **Capable** consists of knowledge and practice.
  - **Knowledge**: Our candidates are knowledgeable about the foundations of education and about their specialty area(s), including appropriate practices.
  - **Practice**: Our candidates apply their knowledge through best practices that include the effective use of educational and information technology and appropriate assessments.

- **Connected** contains communication and integration.
  - **Communication**: Our candidates communicate effectively through a variety of representations (spoken, written, and digital).
  - **Integration**: Our candidates synthesize their knowledge and practices to integrate interdisciplinary perspectives and applications by making connections to real life and by making global issues locally relevant.
The Structure of the Social Studies Teacher Education Program

*N.B: The following courses are only those taken within the teacher education program in social studies education. Content-related general courses have been omitted.

**Semester 1 (Junior year, fall semester)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practicum in Secondary Social Studies 3 (2) “Junior-Level Social Studies Methods”</td>
<td>Pre-service secondary social studies teachers gain both content and pedagogical knowledge by observing and reflecting upon the classroom practices of selected in-service high school social studies teachers. Coreq: Three Hour Lab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicum in Secondary Social Studies Lab (3)</td>
<td>Non-credit laboratory to accompany Junior-Level Social Studies Methods course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of U.S. Public Educ.</td>
<td>Historical survey of the development of United States public schools. May also be offered as HIST 3200. Preq or concurrent enrollment: Orientation to Education and a 2.0 minimum grade-point average. 3.000 Credit hours, 3.000 Lecture hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Semester III (Senior year, fall semester)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Secondary Social Studies 3 (2) “Senior-Level Social Studies Methods”</td>
<td>Development of instructional practices and materials appropriate for secondary social studies; familiarization with curriculum materials; includes field experiences in local schools in preparation for student teaching. Taught fall semester only. Includes Honors sections. Preq: Second semester Junior standing, admission to the professional level, Orientation to Education and Principles of American Education and Educational Psychology and Adolescent Growth and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Secondary Social Studies Laboratory 0 (2)</td>
<td>Non-credit lab to accompany senior-level social studies methods course. Coreq: senior-level social studies methods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Semester IV (Senior year, spring semester)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Social Studies Capstone Seminar 3 (2) Capstone</td>
<td>Seminar accompanying supervised high school social studies teaching internship. Satisfies part of requirement for certification. Offered spring semester only. Preq: Senior-Level social studies methods. Coreq: Student Teaching and Capstone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Social Studies Capstone Seminar Laboratory (3)</td>
<td>Non-credit laboratory to accompany Student Teaching.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview Protocol #1– Junior-Level Social Studies Methods

1. Please describe your background in regards to age, gender and where you are from.

2. Describe how you came to enter the secondary social studies education program.
   a. Why did you want to become a teacher?
   b. Did you always know you wanted to be a teacher? Why.
   c. Why did you decide to become a social studies teacher?

3. Describe your previous experience in K-12 school(s). As you describe the schools,
   please note how you would classify them on a continuum of Good to Bad. Why?

4. Describe one K-12th grade social studies teacher that you had who made an
   impression on you. What type of impression did they make?

5. If you were to describe the typical college class that you have taken, what would you
   say the primary forms of instruction have been? What methods do your instructors or
   professors traditional use to teach?

6. What do you believe the aims or goals of education are?

7. What do you believe the purposes of social studies education are, specifically?

8. What are the best means for social studies teachers to foster these aims? In other
   words, what do ‘good’ social studies teachers do?

9. Describe your ideal social studies teacher?

10. What type of in-service teacher do you envision yourself being?

11. What types of specific strategies do you foresee yourself using in the classroom?

12. When I say the phrase ‘Democratic education,’ what – if anything – comes to mind?

13. Where does dialogue and discourse play into the social studies classroom?

14. Where do controversial issues play into the classroom? Additionally, do you foresee
    yourself using controversy and dialogue in your teaching?

15. Is there anything else you would like to add to anything we’ve previous discussed in
    this interview? If so, what would you like to add?

16. Is there anything that you would like to share with me that I haven’t asked you about?
    If so, what would you like to share?
Interview Protocol #2: Senior-Level Social Studies Methods

1. Please describe your background in regards to age, gender and where you are from.

2. Please describe how you came to enter the secondary social studies education program.
   a. Why did you want to become a teacher?
   b. Did you always know you wanted to be a teacher? Discuss.
   c. Why did you decide to become a social studies teacher?

3. Describe your previous experience in k-12 school(s). As you describe the schools, please note how you would classify them on a continuum of Good to Bad.

4. Describe one K-12th grade social studies teacher that you had who made an impression on you.
   a. What type of impression did they make?
   b. Why did you choose to share your experience with this teacher with me?

5. What do you believe the aims or goals of education are?

6. What do you believe the purposes of social studies education are, specifically?

7. What are the best means for social studies teachers to foster these aims? In other words, what do ‘good’ social studies teachers do?

8. When I say the phrase “Democratic education,” what – if anything – comes to mind?

9. Describe your ideal secondary social studies teacher

10. What type of in-service teacher do you envision yourself being?
    A. What types of specific strategies do you foresee yourself using in the classroom?

11. Is there anything else you would like to add to anything we’ve previous discussed in this interview? If so, what would you like to add?

12. Is there anything that you would like to share with me that I haven’t asked you about? If so, what would you like to share?
Interview Protocol #3: Senior-Level Social Studies Methods

1. Describe the aims of education, broadly

2. What do you believe the purposes of social studies education are, specifically?

3. How do you envision yourself teaching within the social studies classroom?

4. What forms of pedagogy do you foresee yourself using within the social studies classroom?

5. For each of the following pedagogical practices, simply “define” what you envision each to be:
   
   A. Primary Source Analysis
   
   B. Discussion
   
   C. Video Analysis
   
   D. Primary Source Development

6. In what ways can social studies teachers foster the aims of a democratic education?
Interview Protocol #4: Senior-Level Social Studies Methods

1. Please assess the teaching occurring in the video.

2. Describe any key instructional practices seen in the video.

3. To what extent does the teaching in the video relate to the readings and themes we have discussed in Senior-Level Social Studies Methods?

4. Which forms of instruction seen in this video would you consider modeling in your own classroom, if any?
Interview Protocol #5: Senior-Level Social Studies Methods

1. Describe how the lesson went?
2. What do you think went well?
3. What do you think could be improved upon in future lessons?
4. Why do you think the lesson went as it did?
5. Describe the students’ reactions to and engagement during your lesson.
6. What forms of pedagogy would you say that you used while teaching this lesson?
7. If you were to teach this lesson again, describe any changes you would make to your lesson.