



Resistance & Retreat:

Preparing Secondary Social Studies Teachers to Teach Reading

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Abstract

This case study analyzes how adolescents' out-of-school literacy practices were integrated and utilized in a secondary Social Studies methods course. The specific focus of this study is to analyze preservice teachers' responses to this approach, their efforts to integrate reading instruction into their planning and classroom practices and why it is important for secondary Social Studies educators to engage with and honor adolescents' personal literacies.

Introduction

A strong equitable democracy rests upon the ability of citizens to critically evaluate what they read, see and hear and to use this information to make informed decisions. For Social Studies educators, historically charged with preparing students to meaningfully participate in our democracy, providing students with multiple opportunities to learn and practice these critical literacy skills is essential. However few secondary Social Studies educators integrate reading instruction into their practice (Heller & Greenleaf, 2007; Levstik, 2008; Ness, 2007). The causes of this disconnect are varied and complex. Institutional constraints such as the culture and pressures created by high-stakes testing, along with the traditional "grammar of schooling" (Tyack & Tobin, 1994) can have a powerful

marginalizing effect. The deep knowledge of discipline specific reading skills, practices and dispositions essential to helping students engage with advanced complex academic texts can be difficult to develop (Nokes, 2010, 2011). Finally, secondary Social Studies educators' personal beliefs about and experiences with reading and reading instruction can also encourage them to avoid reading with their students (Alger, 2009; Hall, 2005).

Repositioning the role of reading in secondary Social Studies classrooms depends upon a multi-faceted approach; one that not only addresses the structural and cognitive challenges outlined above but adolescents' emotional investments and attitudes toward reading. Many adolescents resist and refuse to engage with school texts. There is an "unfortunate shifting of reading attitudes – from enthusiasm to indifference to hostility" (Gallager, 2009, p.3) as students transition from elementary to middle and high school. Literacy educators argue that adolescents' increasingly negative attitudes toward reading are in part a result of the ways in which their personal literacies are ignored, disregarded and devalued in school (Aleverman, 2003; Moje, 2008; Skerret & Bomer, 2011). To effectively address this resistance, meaningfully integrate reading instruction into Social Studies classrooms and foster the critical literacy skills all citizens need to make informed decisions,

secondary Social Studies educators must learn about and value adolescents' out-of-school literacy practices. They must also be prepared to utilize these practices to help students learn Social Studies content and increase their proficiency with more traditional academic texts.

This case study analyzes how adolescents' out-of-school literacy practices were integrated and utilized in a secondary Social Studies methods course. The specific focus of this study is to analyze preservice teachers' responses to this approach, their efforts to integrate reading instruction into their planning and classroom practices and why it is important for secondary Social Studies educators to engage with and honor adolescents' personal literacies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Secondary Content Area Literacy

Educators have wrestled with the role of reading in secondary schools for over a century (Jacobs, 2008; Moje, 2008). Underlying this tension is the conflation of learning to read with reading to learn (AEE, 2010). The process of learning to read – to decode text and achieve fluency – has traditionally been the purview of elementary educators and as a result most secondary teachers assume students know how to read when they arrive in the ninth grade. While many adolescents (almost 70%) do possess basic reading skills less than 30% can comprehend, analyze or use what they 'decode' (NCES, 2009; 2011). Without these advanced skills and the disposition to read actively, most secondary students do not have the literacy skills they need to use reading to learn content (AEE, 2010, 3).

Despite this need, few secondary content area teachers consider themselves reading teachers and Social Studies educators are not immune to this tendency (Hall, 2005). Defining themselves as content experts, many secondary educators view reading instruction as someone else's responsibility, (Hall, 2005), believe that literacy instruction does not 'mingle' with content instruction (Lesley, et al, 166) and contend that "students do not need reading instruction to be successful with the text(s) used in their classrooms" (Hall, 2005, p.406). Research also reveals that many secondary educators do not possess "positive attitudes" toward academic reading themselves (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Lesley, Watson & Elliot, 2007; Nathanson, Pruslow & Levitt, 2008). Lesley, Watson and Elliot (2007) found that the preservice secondary teachers in their study regularly engaged in "pseudo-reading" or skimming and defined themselves as "bored, unmotivated readers" (156-159). This lack of enthusiasm for reading on the part of many secondary content area teachers

only exacerbates their reluctance to integrate reading instruction into their practice (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Lesley, Watson & Elliot, 2007; Nathanson, Pruslow & Levitt, 2008).

Many states require secondary preservice teachers to complete a course in content area literacy as part of their teacher preparation program as a way to address this gap and help students develop advanced literacy skills. Traditionally, content area literacy instruction focused on generic reading strategies (Hall, 2005; Moje, 2008). More specifically content area literacy courses centered on the cognitive practices of 'good readers' and how secondary educators could integrate these practices into their instruction (Hall, 2005; Moje, 2008). Learning to ask questions, make predictions, test hypotheses, summarize, self-monitor and employ fix-it practices were highlighted as some of the strategies content area teachers could teach their students in order to support the development of their reading skills (Hall, 2005; Moore, Alvermann & Hinchman, 2000). In content area literacy courses, preservice secondary content area teachers are often provided with opportunities to utilize these strategies as readers and to apply them in school settings (L'allier & Elish-Piper 2007; Nathanson et al., 2008). This type of application is noted by content area literacy specialists as "one of the most effective ways to help teacher candidates understand and value reading instruction" (L'allier & Elish-Piper 2007, p. 338-339, emphasis added). This is essential as research has consistently demonstrated that students' attitudes and reading behaviors can be strongly influenced by the reading practices, habits and dispositions teachers model in their classrooms (Applegate & Applegate, 2004).

Though content area literacy courses can foster a more positive attitude and make clear the value of teaching reading this new attitude rarely translates into classroom practice (Hall, 2005; Moje, 2008; Nathanson et al., 2008). Almost 50 years of research reveals that the impact of content area literacy courses has been minimal at best (Hall, 2005; Moje, 2008; Nathanson et al., 2008). Lesley, Watson and Elliot (2007), for example, found that the preservice teachers in their study continued to view reading as "superfluous to their content area" (159). In her study of first year teachers, Alger (2009) discovered that the reading strategies teachers utilized with their students were those that required "minimal engagement with text" (67). Teachers employed what Alger (2009) calls "workarounds" or the integration of strategies that would minimize the amount of independent reading required of students and as a result opportunities for students to become more effective readers were limited (66; 68).

Discipline-Specific Literacy

Research suggests that one reason content area educators do not utilize the literacy strategies and practices learned in their content area literacy courses is because these strategies and practices are not aligned with values and structures of the disciplines they teach (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). In response many content area literacy experts contend that content area literacy instruction must be refocused within a disciplinary frame (Moje, 2008, 99). Each discipline has its own way of “knowing, doing, believing and communicating” (Moje, 2008, 99) and disciplinary-based reading depends upon the acquisition of content specific, sophisticated skills and interpretive practices (Shanahan and Shanahan, 2008). Rather than beginning with the generic practices of good readers, content area literacy instruction should be grounded within the specific reading and writing practices of mathematics or science or history.

In the Social Studies, most of the work on discipline specific literacy focuses on history and what it means to ‘read like a historian’ (Damico, Baildon, Exter & Guo, 2010; Joel, Hebard, Haubner & Moran, 2010; Monte-Sano, 2011; Wineburg, 2001). Wineburg’s seminal text, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts* (2001), forms the foundation of much of this research and provides a powerful portrait of historians’ reading practices. The Stanford History Education Group has built upon this research to design curriculum materials including the Reading Like A Historian program to help educators teach these discipline-specific reading practices to their students. These curriculum materials are relatively new and therefore research on how teachers are utilizing these materials with their students is only beginning. Reisman’s (2010) research on the ways in which high school history teachers can design document-based lessons that manage the “real world realities of school” (p. 234) including pressures to ‘cover’ content for high-stake exams and struggling adolescent readers is one such effort.

Vital to the increase and effective use of discipline specific reading practices and curriculum materials such as the Reading Like A Historian program in secondary classrooms is a re-thinking secondary Social Studies teacher education. As Gewertz (2012) notes the analytical approach to doing history and reading like a historian embodied in discipline-specific literacy practices and new curriculum materials requires a “type of preparation that isn’t common in programs of teacher education” (p. 10). To prepare secondary Social Studies educators to teach their students how to read like a historian, preservice teachers need opportunities to develop and practice these skills themselves. Neumann (2010) argues that in “many cases teachers’ inability to shape

students’ understanding of primary sources reflects their own epistemologies” (p. 489) and the ways in which some teachers remain “philosophically naïve in their approach to documents” (p. 489). Given these tensions, Neumann suggests that teacher education coursework should focus on the “purposive nature of texts” (p. 490) in order to better prepare preservice teachers to teach advanced reading skills to their students.

In “Preparing Novice History Teachers to Meet Students’ Literacy Needs” Nokes (2010) analyzes his own efforts to integrate content area literacy into his secondary Social Studies methods course. More specifically, the course was structured to both provide opportunities for preservice teachers to learn and practice how to read like a historian and to consider how they can teach their students the same skills and dispositions. Nokes notes that one-third of the course including instructional time and reading materials addressed issues of literacy (2010). Particular focus was given to the process of selecting texts to read with high school students as well as research-based instructional strategies and Nokes also modeled effective literacy instruction. However as the practicum associated with the course was primarily observational, preservice teachers did not have an opportunity to apply the strategies learned in high school classrooms (p. 515). Reviewing data from six consecutive semesters Nokes found that a majority of the preservice teachers enrolled in his secondary Social Studies methods course deepened their knowledge of discipline-specific literacy and were able to apply this knowledge in the development of lesson plans and learning activities. Each preservice teacher wrote what Nokes calls a ‘practicum literacy paper’ that revealed preservice teachers developing awareness of literacy instruction and different types of texts (p. 509-512). However “only a handful of candidates recognized students’ unique literacy identities” (p. 512), a majority were surprised by adolescents’ disinterest in reading school texts and none acknowledged students’ out-of-school literacies practices (p. 512).

Adolescent Literacy

Few adolescents benefit from reading instruction if they are not motivated to read (Kamil, 2003). Throughout the literature on adolescent literacy the importance of motivation and engagement in reading comprehension is a common refrain (Pitcher, et al, 2010; NCTE, 2006; NCTE, 2007; Moje, et al, 2008). Studies on motivation, adolescents and reading suggest that providing students with access to a wide variety of text types, “desirable reading material,” and choice is key (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; NCTE, 2006; NCTE, 2007; Pitcher, et al, 2010; Moje, et al,

2008). Other contextual factors that foster motivation include the integration of electronic and visual media, the incorporation of multiple perspectives, a clearly articulated purpose for any reading activity and a classroom environment in which students are provided with multiple opportunities to discuss what they read (NCTE, 2006; NCTE 2007).

Although most adolescents are not proficient with traditional, print-based academic texts, outside of school many engage with a wide range of multimodal texts (Franzek, 2006; Mills, 2010; Skerrett & Bomer, 2011). Websites, video games, online fanfiction, social networking sites, graphic novels, magazines, digital movie composing and music lyrics are among the nontraditional texts adolescents interact with daily (Franzek, 2006; Mills, 2010; Skerrett & Bomer, 2011). In a myriad of ways adolescents live “purposeful, practical, richly literate lives” outside of school (Skerrett & Bomer, 2011, p.1251) and the multifaceted nature of literacy should not be ignored if we hope to engage adolescents with more traditional academic texts. Adolescents’ existing literacy practices can act as a resource to both increase students’ motivation and build bridges to more traditional academic texts (Franzek, 2006; Mills, 2010; Skerrett & Bomer, 2011). Vasuderan (2007) found that by attending to the multimodal literacy practices of adolescents she was not only able to create new opportunities for learning content but to build a stronger relationship with her student. Similarly, Skerrett & Bomer (2011) found that teachers’ efforts to situate instruction within the context of students’ literacy lives outside of school enabled students to develop powerful connections between these out-of-school literacies and the official curriculum. These scholars argue that “approaching students with school demands without first acknowledging their competence in so many (out-of-school) literacy activities” is questionable at best (Skerrett & Bomer, 2011, p.1276). Yet adolescents’ everyday literacy practices are rarely valued and utilized in most classrooms (NCTE, 2007). Alverman (2003) suggests that “rather than remediating students we need to re/mediate the curriculum by including media and other texts that are important to adolescents” (p.22). Building reading instruction upon adolescents’ everyday literacy practices is an asset-oriented approach that positions students as capable rather than deficit (Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009). Ignoring or rejecting students’ existing literacy practices as valuable only increases their resistance to academic or school-based reading (NCTE, 2007).

Over the last five years I, like Nokes (2010), have worked to integrate literacy and more specifically reading instruction into a secondary Social Studies methods course. Attention is given to the practices

of ‘good readers,’ the discipline specific skills and dispositions of reading like a historian and research-based instructional practices. Preservice teachers and I participate in a number of reading activities and workshops as well as lesson design. My students deepen their understanding of literacy and the practice of reading like a historian as well as their knowledge of instructional strategies; yet, the implementation of these lessons and reading activities is anything but smooth. There are many factors that inform if, how and when any lesson will ‘work’ but the common denominator in this case has been the ways in which I failed to attend the complex world of adolescent literacy. Without explicitly attending to, engaging with and honoring the personal literacy practices adolescents bring with them to history classrooms, I helped preservice teachers to design and implement reading instruction that ignored students’ personal literacy practices. Drawing upon these experiences and the above research I redesigned the Social Studies methods course with a specific focus on adolescents’ out-of-school literacies as the starting point for integrating reading instruction into secondary Social Studies instruction. In this case study, I analyze preservice teachers’ responses to this approach, their efforts to integrate reading instruction into their planning and classroom practices and why it is important for secondary Social Studies educators to engage with and honor adolescents’ personal literacies.

Methodology

Secondary preservice teachers in Georgia are not required to complete a course in content area literacy as part of their teacher certification programs. The secondary education program at my institution also does not require candidates to complete a course in content area literacy and therefore reading instruction must be integrated into content area methods courses if it is to be addressed during secondary teacher education programs in the state. Over the last five years I have worked to integrate literacy instruction into the curriculum of the middle grades and secondary Social Studies methods courses I teach. My focus has been to draw upon the reading practices of historians – sourcing, contextualization and corroboration – to model critical literacy and to support preservice teachers as they work to integrate this type of reading instruction into their practice. The results have been questionable at best. Anecdotal evidence suggests that preservice teachers were reluctant to embrace reading instruction in part due to their frustration with high school students’ negative attitudes toward reading. With this insight in mind, I revised the curriculum of the course to specifically address adolescent literacy, adolescents’ everyday literacy practices and their resistance to academic reading. The intent was to increase preservice Social

Studies teachers' awareness of the reading practices, skills and dispositions many high school students bring to the classroom and to help them understand how to use these resources in the design and implementation of reading instruction.

To provide a detailed contextualized analysis of my efforts, a case study research design was utilized (Yin, 1984). The case for this study is the Secondary Social Studies Methods course required for all Secondary Social Studies preservice teachers enrolled in the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program at my home institution. Preservice Social Studies teachers in the MAT program have completed an undergraduate degree in history or another social science as well as an educational foundations course, a special education course, and an introductory instructional methods course prior to enrolling in the secondary Social Studies methods course. The methods course meets one night a week for approximately three hours over the course of a sixteen week semester. The spring 2011 section of the course was the specific site for this study. There were ten students enrolled in the methods course in the spring of 2011. All ten students were White. There were six men and four women enrolled in the course and of these ten students five agreed to participate in the study. Among the participants were three men and two women with an approximate age range of 23 to 27. All five had a bachelor's degree in history.

Data Collection

A variety of qualitative research methods were utilized to document the activities of the secondary Social

Studies methods course and a graduate student in the College of Education assisted with data collection. Interviews were conducted by the graduate student assistant at the beginning and at the end of the semester with each participant. The focus of the first interview was on participants' perceptions about the role of reading in Social Studies teaching and learning as well as their perceptions of the challenges they might face as they teach reading within the context of high school Social Studies. The second interview focused on participants' classroom-based experiences, their efforts to integrate reading into instruction, students' reactions to reading assignments and the lessons they learned from these experiences. A second data source is a series of video recordings of the secondary Social Studies methods course. Each week the class met, the graduate student assistant attended the class session and videotaped all learning activities and discussions. Written work created as part of in-class learning activities and the instructional units developed by the preservice teachers participating in the study constituted a third data source. Finally, my own reflective journal entries, completed after each class session, are the final data source.

Data Analysis

Data sources were organized chronologically in order to construct a narrative account of the semester. Data sources for each week were grouped together. I then read and/or viewed all data sources beginning with data collected during week one of the semester and proceeding week by week. Digital audio and video files, student-created documents and my journal entries were used to triangulate data sources and



develop categories for coding. A constant comparative method was utilized for data analysis (Creswell, 1998). This initial review of data was utilized to identify data segments that corresponded with my effort to integrate adolescents' out-of-school literacy practices into the course, preservice teachers' responses to reading instruction as it was enacted in the secondary Social Studies methods course, and their experiences teaching reading to adolescents. Open coding was employed to analyze these data segments. These initial codes were then grouped into broader categories that became the foundation for major themes emerging from the data. To share findings from this case study, I provide a narrative account of the semester integrating a description of class activities, preservice teachers' participation in and reaction to these activities with my analysis.

FINDINGS

Week One – “Reading is important!”

After the first meeting of the secondary Social Studies methods course, students who consented to participate in the study were interviewed about their perceptions of the role of reading in teaching and learning Social Studies. Of the five preservice teachers who participated in the study all five concluded that reading is essential to teaching and learning Social Studies. Renee noted that “reading is most of Social Studies” and concluded her remarks by stating that “you can't have Social Studies without reading.” Others discussed the ways in which reading can provide students with opportunities to “get the viewpoints of different people,” and Andrew argued that students cannot “really understand the subject without reading.”

While each participant was convinced of the power of reading as a way to learn none noted that in order for this learning to occur explicit reading instruction may be needed. Asked to consider their responsibility to teach their students how to read, participants responded with hesitation and in some cases confusion. “Well I suppose it is everyone's responsibility to teach reading,” Peter suggested but could not articulate what this might look like in a high school Social Studies classroom. Ensuring that students understand what they read was the focus for most participants as well as helping students to evaluate and analyze different types of sources. Once again participants did not and/or could not articulate how they might help their students understand, evaluate and analyze different types of texts. Each participant spoke enthusiastically about the type of texts they hoped to utilize in their classrooms but in doing so did not also consider that they will have to teach their students how to read these texts. Renee was excited about using primary sources and even described a possible lesson utilizing Martin

Luther King Jr's Letter from a Birmingham Jail. Only one participant mentioned textbooks as a possible tool and none mentioned websites, digital and print newspapers, graphic novels, magazines, music lyrics or any other texts that most adolescents interact with on a daily basis.

When asked to consider what challenges they might face when integrating reading into instruction, all participants' responses echoed Peter's who noted “I haven't thought about this.” Andrew, Peter and Renee each suggested that the different reading levels of students could be “problematic.” Susan and Daniel mentioned that some students dislike reading. While Susan did not elaborate, Daniel noted “I would just force them to.”

This initial interview revealed that each participant believes reading plays an important role in teaching and learning Social Studies but had thought little about what this might look like in practice. More specifically, though they envisioned using primary sources to teach Social Studies content, they could not articulate how they would help their students read these sources. Caught off-guard when asked to consider their own role in teaching reading, these preservice secondary Social Studies teachers had also not considered the possible obstacles or challenges to utilizing reading as a way for students to learn content. Though discussion about the use of primary sources is promising, participants did not consider any other nontraditional texts as a possible resource.

Weeks Two & Three – “I didn't realize it was such a problem.”

During the second and third meetings of the secondary Social Studies methods course, I engaged participants in an investigation and discussion about both adolescent literacy and current classroom practices. This investigation began with an assessment of what preservice teachers enrolled in the course knew about adolescent literacy and their personal observations. Using the free online tool, Poll Everywhere, participants texted their responses to the following questions: (1) what percentage of high school students can comprehend and evaluate what they read? and (2) what do you think is the number one reason why adolescents resist and/or refuse to read?

Responses to the first question ranged from sixty to seventy percent and in response to the second question a majority of participants indicated that they believed students' refusal to read was intimately tied to their abilities and not necessarily linked to the type of text or its interest level. Once all responses were registered and visible, I revealed the differences

between preservice teachers' beliefs and assumptions about adolescent literacy and what research has demonstrated. As results from the 2009 NAEP reading assessment were posted, participants were shocked and visibly upset. "I can't believe it is this bad," Renee noted, shaking her head. Peter was not convinced that the results of the NAEP reading assessment were accurate. "How can this be true when so many people go on to college? It's not like we're a bunch of illiterates." Along with shock and disbelief, two participants expressed concern about the implications of adolescents' poor reading skills for their practice as Social Studies educators. Somewhat stunned by the fact that only 30% of high school graduates can comprehend and evaluate what they read, Susan wondered, "How can we teach Social Studies if they can't read? We'll have to lecture all the time."

Participants listed "difficulty comprehending texts" as the number one reason why adolescents resist or refuse to read. When prompted to explain this response Andrew noted that "the students who refuse to read are the ones who can't" disregarding other reasons why students might resist reading. This comment generated a discussion about aliteracy and why someone who can read might simply refuse to do so. When I shared with preservice teachers that the number one reason adolescents refuse to read is because they view the texts that they are asked to read in school as "irrelevant" and "dull," reaction was almost instantaneous. Daniel spoke first, proclaiming, "This is ridiculous! They can't expect to be entertained all the time. We all had to read textbooks—so can they." Others, such as Susan, while partially agreeing with Daniel, also noted that she did not complete assigned readings she considered "boring."

As a follow-up to this discussion, participants were asked to spend the next week at their practicum site gathering data about the type of reading materials and reading activities utilized in the classroom as well as an approximation of time spent on reading during each class session. Findings from these informal observations were shared during the next class session. Preservice teachers reported their findings in small group settings, analyzed the data for patterns across multiple classrooms and then reported to the whole class. This data collection revealed that preservice teachers had limited opportunities to observe reading/reading instruction in local secondary Social Studies classrooms. More specifically, a majority of the preservice teachers noted that few if any independent reading assignments were required and there was little time allotted in class for students to read the textbook or other materials. According to preservice teachers' observational data, teachers who did integrate reading into their instruction relied

primarily on the course textbook and the occasional primary source. The instruction associated with these reading assignments included completion of comprehension questions and graphic organizers.

At this point, I shared with preservice teachers informal survey data I collected in the fall of 2010. An invitation to participate in an online survey was issued to all high school Social Studies teachers in the school districts where secondary Social Studies preservice teachers are placed for their practicum and student teaching experiences. The survey focused specifically on the role of reading in teachers' instruction. Results from this survey mirrored the patterns identified by preservice teachers based on their observations. While the preservice teachers only recorded their observations, the survey also included items about teachers' perceptions of the challenges and/or obstacles to integrating reading into their instruction. Student resistance was cited by a majority of respondents as the primary obstacle to integrating reading into their instruction. After sharing this data with preservice teachers enrolled in the secondary Social Studies methods course, I asked participants to consider how they could work through this type of resistance with their students. A lengthy silence ensued. Peter was the first to speak. "I suppose we could let them know what the consequences would be for not doing the reading like a zero in the grade book or something like that." As other participants offered similar suggestions, it became clear that most preservice teachers perceived students' resistance to reading solely as a threat to a teacher's authority. The idea that students' resistance to reading could be understood as a form of agency or a sign that reading as it was introduced, practiced and evaluated in Social Studies classrooms did not build upon and honor adolescents' personal literacies was never considered.

At this point, I asked students to consider the disconnect between the ways in which our class defined reading as essential to learning and teaching social studies, the marginal role of reading in many secondary Social Studies classrooms and the ways in which student resistance was a major deterrent. "The reality," Peter explained, "is most high school students can't read well enough and the teacher has to cover all the standards in time for the End-of-Course exam. There is simply no time and students won't do it." Peter's comments solicited some nods of agreement while Daniel asked "Why don't you just teach us how to teach Social Studies without reading? I mean ways that we can teach the content and avoid asking the students to read." I agreed with Daniel that in many ways this approach was the "most logical" solution but I also challenged his thinking by asking "So do we just give up - even though we think reading plays an

important role in teaching and learning Social Studies content? Are there other issues we should consider – beyond teaching content? What role does reading play in the lives of citizens?” Preservice teachers discussed these questions in small groups and then shared their ideas with the whole class. Andrew shared that his group decided it “wasn’t fair to students to avoid reading because it was hard.” In general participants were uncomfortable with idea that the ‘wisest’ solution to this dilemma would be to purposefully avoid reading with their students. Discussion of the ways in which illiteracy can create “nasty citizens” (to use Andrew’s words) was intense with preservice teachers noting not only low voter turn-out but the recent economic downturn as problematic consequences. As our discussion shifted to considering alternatives, Renee recalled “last week we learned that the primary reason students refuse to read is because they think what they are given to read is boring. Maybe that has something to do with it.” I concluded the class noting that over the next six weeks we would explore how to address student resistance by utilizing a wider variety of materials and adolescents’ everyday literacy practices.

Learning activities and discussions held during week two and three revealed that preservice teachers enrolled in the secondary Social Studies methods were generally unaware of our nation’s “adolescent literacy crisis.” When confronted with the reality that many of their future students will struggle to comprehend academic texts and/or simply refuse to read, they were dismayed. Their initial reaction was to consider how they could teach Social Studies and avoid asking their students to read. Thus even the idea of student resistance and/or difficulty pushed these preservice teachers into what Linda McNeill has elsewhere called a “defensive teaching” stance (1988). McNeill argues that some teachers adopt teaching methods and stances that enable them to maintain discipline and control in the classroom rather than confront “unruly” or resistant students and create challenging curriculum (1988). In choosing lessons that fragment, omit, mystify or simplify – such as those that ‘workaround’ reading – teachers also maintain control over knowledge rather than provide opportunities for students to question and challenge. (McNeill, 1988). The next six weeks of the course were intended to address the likelihood that many of the secondary preservice Social Studies teachers enrolled in the course would encounter student resistance to reading and provide resources to help them work with their students to move through this resistance rather than around it.

Weeks 4-10 “Does this count as reading?”

During the next six weeks as preservice teachers worked collaboratively to develop units of instruction, I

modeled how to utilize adolescents’ everyday literacy practices as a way to begin to address students’ resistance to reading and integrate reading instruction into their practice while teaching important Social Studies content and literacy skills. Preservice teachers were required to include one lesson integrating reading instruction into their unit. Each week I utilized a different type of text including blogs, video, graphic novels, music lyrics and young adult literature. As we utilized each of these texts we practiced the discipline-specific literacy skills of sourcing, corroboration and contextualization. Model lessons included a specific purpose for each reading activity, multiple opportunities for preservice teachers to discuss what they were reading and to make connections between the texts, historical and contemporary issues.

Video recordings of weekly class sessions suggest that while most participants were engaged during the lessons, the content of their debriefing discussions revealed skepticism about the benefits of using some of these alternative texts. For example, during a model lesson on the Bill of Rights Jonathon Hennessey’s and Aaron McConnell’s graphic adaptation of the U.S. Constitution was the focus text and was utilized to introduce participants to graphic novels and their potential uses in Social Studies classrooms. The lesson began with an anticipation guide asking preservice teachers to consider the constraints on students’ first amendment rights in public schools. For each statement on the anticipation guide, preservice teachers were asked to indicate whether or not the speech act described would be protected by the 1st Amendment. Statements were based on Supreme Court cases dealing with students’ first amendment rights such as *Tinker vs. Des Moines* and *Hazelhurst*. As preservice teachers shared their responses, it became clear that there was little if any agreement about which speech acts would or would not be protected and this discussion provided context and an explicit purpose for our reading of the Bill of Rights.

Each participant was provided with a color copy of the depiction and explanation of the 1st Amendment found in Hennessey’s and McConnell’s *The U.S. Constitution: A Graphic Adaptation* (2008). Hennessey’s and McConnell’s depiction of the Bill of Rights begins with their explanation of why the Bill of Rights was included in the Constitution. I utilized this two page explanation to model for preservice teachers how to read a graphic novel and consider how composition, viewing angles, color, text and images are used to position the reader. In the *US Constitution: A Graphic Adaptation* the image of a huge, three-headed creature is utilized to depict the ways in which if left unchecked the power of the federal government can be dangerous. In the next panel, the monster is still fierce but calm and

chained by the Bill of Rights. Our discussion and analysis of these panels and those that followed was lively and provided opportunity for preservice teachers to consider different aspects of the text. Following this whole class read aloud and discussion, preservice teachers worked in pairs to read about the 1st Amendment, learn about the ways in which freedom of speech is not absolute and how these restrictions might apply in the case of public school students' 1st Amendment rights.

As I visited with each group during this reading activity, there was every indication that Hennessey's and McConnell's text was well received. "This is image of the 'zone of freedom' will really help students understand limitations on freedom of speech," Andrew remarked and in another group Peter and Renee were debating the appropriateness of some of the images utilized by Hennessey and McConnell. Though all the preservice teachers in the class actively participated and seemed to enjoy reading this graphic adaptation of the U.S. Constitution, our debriefing discussion following the lesson revealed an entirely different response.

After groups shared their findings from reading and discussion of the text and completed a short writing activity to conclude the lesson, I conducted a book pass that provided preservice teachers with opportunity to see the wide variety of graphic novels available to teach Social Studies content. Next, I asked participants to discuss if, how, when and why they might utilize this text or another graphic novel in their instruction. Groups were also asked to consider the benefits of this type of text as well as some of the drawbacks. During the discussion it became clear that while most preservice teachers recognized the power of images to teach difficult concepts they were also hesitant to embrace this text or graphic novels as "legitimate" texts for secondary Social Studies classrooms. Andrew and Susan noted that the images provided could "really help students understand ideas that can be confusing." Renee agreed and also noted that "students are already reading a lot of graphic novels so they might be more willing to read if we use these." Though there was general agreement with the idea that graphic novels can support student learning, Peter argued that the "pictures can create more confusion. They confused me."

Peter's comment shifted the focus of the discussion away from the potential uses and benefits of graphic novels toward critique. "Even though they might be helpful, I won't use them because they are not real texts," Susan noted. When asked why, she explained, "They read this type of stuff all the time outside of school. In school they need to read the real thing – like

the actual Constitution." Renee countered "I might use them occasionally but I think Susan is right. They need to read the real thing." Other participants immediately agreed. Andrew, Peter and Renee quickly noted that they wanted to use "primary sources all the time" and therefore they wouldn't need to track down all these different types of texts. When I asked them to consider how they can use graphic novels and other types of text as a bridge to what they called "real reading," there was an uncomfortable silence. Daniel broke the silence by explaining, "Really Dr. X.....we need to teach them what the need to know for the CRCT and the End of Course Exam. And the textbooks are aligned with the exams. They need to read those." "The other thing," Andrew added, "is that no one is doing this at my school." At this point I asked participants to recall why most students refuse to read and how using different types of texts might address this resistance. Responses to this question were vague at best. Though two preservice teachers (Susan and Peter) were intrigued enough to borrow two of my graphic novels, each participant was hesitant about utilizing these types of texts in their classrooms.

As the above example illustrates, the model lessons I implemented produced mixed results. Preservice teachers actively engaged with a wide range of texts during this six week period. As a result of this exposure some wanted to read more such as Peter and Susan and most were willing to note the potential benefits. There was also a clearly articulated perception that alternative texts such as graphic novels and music lyrics do not "count as real reading." Though participants recognized digital newspapers as "legitimate," they were reluctant to consider multimodal texts such as graphic novels as valuable. In this instance, it was not necessarily preservice teachers' desire to avoid student resistance but a particular conceptualization of literacy and knowledge that informed their response. Denoting multimodal texts such as graphic novels as not "real" texts the preservice teachers in this study articulated a very specific belief about reading; one built upon a "hierarchy of importance" that defined out-of-school literacy practices as irrelevant (Lesley, 2011). Despite their own engagement with alternative texts such as graphic novels and these texts' potential to support student learning, the preservice teachers in this study were reluctant to view these texts as "appropriate" or as bridge to more traditional academic texts.

Weeks 11-16 "I'm forcing them to do something they don't want to do."

During the last six weeks of the course, preservice teachers finalized their instructional units and then implemented these units in secondary Social Studies classrooms at their practicum site. Each participant was interviewed about their teaching experiences with



particular attention given to their efforts to integrate reading instruction into their unit. Preservice teachers were required to integrate reading into at least one lesson in their unit.

Reading lessons created by participants provided a clear purpose for reading activities as well as multiple opportunities for students to discuss what they read. For example, Peter utilized a read aloud format that integrated paired discussions and quick writes as a way to help students process the ideas and concepts presented in the selected text. Renee asked students to work in groups of three, to assume three different perspectives and to discuss reactions to a common text from the assigned perspective. While each participant integrated reading-based discussion into their lesson design, their choices of reading materials included more traditional academic texts. Two of the five participants asked students to read short newspaper articles. Daniel required students to read the assigned textbook, while Andrew utilized Supreme Court cases in his unit on the Bill of Rights. Renee was the only participant to utilize a nontraditional text such as those explored in the methods course. In her unit on the Cold War, Renee asked students to read selected sections from Larry Gonick's *Comic History of the World* (1991).

The instructional units designed by participants suggest that they were beginning to understand

the role of discussion in reading to learn and the importance of providing a specific and clear purpose for each reading activity. Each preservice teacher also designed a series of questions to help students evaluate authors' purpose and intended audience; one of the fundamental practices to learning to read like a historian. In this regard, their units reflected the reading instruction modeled in the Social Studies methods course. The disconnect between reading instruction modeled in the Social Studies methods course and reading instruction designed by preservice teachers was in the choice of texts. Despite my emphasis on the ways in which nontraditional texts can motivate and engage adolescent learners, a majority of participants rejected this concept and utilized more traditional academic texts.

When reflecting on their teaching experiences during the second interview, participants discussed both students' reactions to their efforts to integrate reading instruction into their unit and the lessons they learned from these experiences. Daniel insisted that students "hated the reading lesson," and noted that reading should be "secondary to the curriculum" in Social Studies classrooms. Susan and Peter expressed frustration with their students' "negative" reaction to reading and Susan noted that in the future "I will definitely keep it (reading) to a minimum." All participants noted that their students "moaned and groaned" about reading and described reading assignments as "boring" and "too hard." For Andrew,

students' complaints and "foot-dragging" prompted him to drop one of the assigned readings. Only Renee had a semi-positive experience noting that her students were "intrigued by the graphic novel."

The role of reading in secondary Social Studies classrooms was revisited during this second interview and while all participants still noted its importance, they were more conflicted about their role in teaching reading and how they would integrate reading into their instruction. Andrew concurred that reading instruction is "definitely needed" but that "most of it should happen in Language Arts." As noted above, Daniel concluded that reading should be "second to the content." Susan argued Social Studies "should have some reading in it but it should be taught in English. We should ask students to read some but not very much." None mentioned the relationship between literacy and an active, informed citizenry.

Each participant did speak openly about students' resistance to reading. "When I asked them to read the textbook it felt like the longest 10 minutes of my life," Daniel noted in his interview. "I don't want to feel like that again." Susan, Peter, Renee and Andrew also spoke about the discomfort, frustration and "pain" they felt when they asked students to read. "Their mood shifted so much when I said we were going to read a newspaper article," Peter explained during his interview. "They were just being stubborn. It was really frustrating after I had spent all that time creating the lesson and finding a reading. What a waste!" Susan's reaction to students' resistance was more inwardly focused. She spoke about her disappointment with the reading lesson and concluded her remarks by contending that "rejection hurts."

Despite efforts to prepare preservice teachers for adolescents' resistance to academic reading, participants still seemed "shocked" by their students' lack of motivation and disengagement. Facing students' negativity preservice teachers once again retreated. As noted earlier, participants in this study adopted a defensive teaching stance rather than address students' disengagement with reading and adjust their notions of what "counts" as reading.

Discussion and Implications

There are a myriad of reasons why reading and reading instruction are not a prominent feature of many secondary Social Studies classrooms. As noted earlier, the pressures of content coverage and high-stakes exams and the difficulties of teaching discipline-specific reading practices can in part explain why most secondary Social Studies educators do not read with their students. Adolescents' reluctance and resistance to engaging with traditional academic texts poses yet

another challenge. In this case study, I attempted to attend to the challenge of adolescents' resistance by working to prepare preservice secondary Social Studies teachers to utilize adolescents' out-of-school literacy practices as a starting point for reading instruction.

Like many preservice secondary teachers, the participants in this study had not seriously consider the role of reading/literacy instruction in teaching content and more specifically Social Studies content prior to this semester. Their knowledge of adolescents' proficiency with academic texts and adolescents' personal literacy practices was marginal at best. Over the course of the semester as we learned about the complex world of adolescent literacy preservice teachers engaged with a wide variety of texts and discussed possibilities for utilizing these texts to teach Social Studies content and discipline-specific reading practices. Their knowledge of reading instruction deepened as they participated in, planned and implemented reading lessons. However, an overall reluctance to recognize 'non-academic' texts such as graphic novels, music lyrics and video games as 'legitimate' and valuable forms of reading meant that the preservice teachers in this study did not create reading activities utilizing adolescents' personal literacies.

Reflecting on their attempts to utilize reading as a way to learn Social Studies content, participants were frustrated and in some cases even angry at their students limited engagement with the texts they had selected. Rather than considering how their curriculum choices played a role in students' overwhelmingly negative reactions to reading, preservice teachers were quick to retreat suggesting that perhaps reading and reading instruction belong solely in Language Arts classrooms. The role of critical reading skills in a democracy and Social Studies educators' role in helping young people develop these skills forgotten.

I have attempted to integrate reading and literacy instruction into the secondary Social Studies methods course I teach for over five years. Results of my previous efforts were mixed. Preservice teachers developed new understandings about reading instruction and discipline-specific reading but when attempting to integrate reading into their practice they met with such strong resistance from students they quickly retreated. My earlier attempts ignored the ways in which adolescents' personal literacy practices are an important tool and resource upon which secondary Social Studies teachers can build connections to more traditional academic texts. To address this gap and provide preservice Social Studies teachers with tools and knowledge to address and move through adolescents' resistance to academic reading I situated

the out-school-literacy practices of adolescents as fundamental to reading instruction. However, because I did not require preservice teachers to utilize adolescents' everyday literacy practices in the lessons they created, a majority chose to utilize more traditional academic texts such as textbooks and newspaper articles rather than graphic novels, song lyrics or video games. The results of their efforts to use reading to learn important Social Studies content mirrored those of previous semesters. Strong resistance to and negativity toward reading from their students meant that the preservice teachers in this study were quickly ready to abandon reading.

From these results it is difficult to ascertain if the focus on adolescents' personal literacy practices could have provided a way for preservice teachers to work through students' resistance to school texts as they were unwilling to utilize this approach. The questions preservice teachers raised about the 'legitimacy' of the non-traditional texts and reading practices modeled in the methods course provides a clue to understanding why they refused to apply what they learned in their methods course to their own instruction. Preservice teachers' beliefs about reading and reading instruction were not explicitly engaged and analyzed as part of the secondary Social Studies methods course.

Stewart (1990) argues that unless content area preservice teachers' "complex and deeply ingrained beliefs" (p.62) about literacy and their own literacy identities are made visible and carefully examined little will change. Literacy experts and educators have long argued that autobiographical writing about reading experiences is fundamental to the process of preparing secondary content area teachers to integrate reading instruction into their practice (Alvine, 2001; Bean, 1994; Clark & Medina, 2000; Lesley, 2011; Soliday, 1994). Without engaging in this type of reflection it is difficult to critically examine deep-rooted beliefs about literacy or to consider the ways in which reading is not a 'natural' act but a culturally and socially situated practice (Soliday, 1994).

In this study a critical examination of preservice secondary Social Studies teachers' beliefs about reading and reading instruction might have mitigated their rejection of 'non-academic' texts as legitimate teaching and learning tools. It may have also helped them to recognize the ways in which adolescents' personal literacies can act as the starting point for reading instruction in Social Studies classrooms. Findings from this study and my earlier efforts to integrate reading into the secondary Social Studies methods course suggest that it will be important to engage preservice secondary Social Studies teachers in an autobiographical exercise such as those recommended by scholars like Bean and Lesley.

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