

Examining the Intellectual Biography of Pre-Service Teachers: Elements of “Critical” Teacher Knowledge

By Cinthia Salinas & Brooke Blevins

Introduction

Teacher knowledge, the sources of that knowledge, and the day-to-day use of that knowledge have become focal points of contemporary research on teacher education. As this body of research has found, a teacher’s knowledge base and her subsequent practice is a composite of her beliefs and identities (Britzman, 2003), experiences (Lortie, 1975), knowledge of content (Wineburg & Wilson, 2001), knowledge of pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986b), and interpretation of education course work field experiences (Adler, 2008; Borko & Mayfield, 1995), all of which depicts the complexity of teaching.

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This research on teacher knowledge has also been contextualized and conceptualized within the realm of linguistically and culturally diverse learning contexts (Gay, 2002; Nieto & Bode, 2012). Teacher education programs have embraced this focus by centering upon a social justice perspective—one that emphasizes an awareness of “the ways schools may reproduce hierarchies based on race, class, gender, and sexuality”

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(McDonald & Zeichner, 2009, p. 595) and/or critical pedagogy—one that exposes the selection and incorporation of knowledge in an effort to promote transformative social action in the interest of oppressed communities (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003, p. 3). Both social justice and critical pedagogy explicitly call for an examination of what teachers know and can learn in order to confront institutional practices that act to perpetuate inequities for culturally, economically, and linguistically diverse students (Sleeter, 2009).

In this qualitative analysis, we explore how purposefully challenging the official curriculum and its dominant, hegemonic ideologies and worldviews provides pre-service social studies teachers with vital opportunities to confront and challenge K-12 schooling practices that create inequities. As Apple (1992) explains, though the official curriculum is a contentious event, “teachers have a long history of mediating and transforming text materials when they employ it in classrooms” (p. 10). We argue that teachers’ deviation from the traditional canon is not simply an act of intellectual defiance but rather an understanding of how “to think critically about and challenge the universality of that knowledge” (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009, p. 635). The knowledge pre-service teachers use to mediate and transform the curriculum ought to be examined as an “interpretation of their experiences [as] embedded in social and cultural contexts” (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005, p. 86). In sum, what teachers know, how they know what they know, and how they use what they know to engage in the critical teaching of the curriculum is essential in adding to our understanding of how to construct a more social justice and critical pedagogy oriented teacher education program.

The purpose of this article is to investigate how pre-service social studies teachers come to understand their disciplines as a way to challenge the power structures and institutional practice which inhibit the realization of democratic ideals. Certainly, this investigation may be an endeavor within any discipline taught in schools; however, we specifically contextualize this research within the field of social studies education. In this article, we first situate the research within existing literature, then we establish our conceptual framework using the notion of intellectual biography, and then move on to explore how this framework can be used to better understand how pre-service social studies teachers understand and use their disciplinary knowledge to challenge the traditional curriculum.

Review of Literature

Cornbleth (1985) distinguishes between the technical project of curriculum—one that adheres to a predetermined end product and is premised upon an apolitical and non-ideological assumption about the nature and substance of knowledge, and that of the social process of curriculum construction—a more ecological understanding of the construction of curriculum that is the result of an ongoing dynamic between teachers, students, curricular materials, and a variety of contextual influences both

within and outside the classroom. The *curriculum-in-use* created as a result of this social process is not simply the mandated curriculum, but is rather what knowledge and learning opportunities are actually made available to students, how they are created, and what values they reflect and sustain. The enacted curriculum (Ball & Cohen, 1996) then situates teacher knowledge, the source of that knowledge, and day-to-day use of that knowledge as an instrumental element in the classroom. Attending to teachers' thinking abandons simplistic and behaviorist renditions and instead examines the complex and intricate nature of teaching, including:

...the kinds of knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs teachers [bring] with them into preparation programs; the way their knowledge of subject matter [changes] and [is] translated into classroom practice over time; the ways teachers [interpret] their fieldwork and course experiences in light of their own school experiences... (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005, p. 84)

A gamut of factors inform teacher learning including a teacher's knowledge of content, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and so forth—ranging from teacher identity (Britzman, 2003; Richardson, 2003), teacher cognition (Shulman, 1986b; Wineburg & Wilson, 2001), and the ways in which teachers position disciplinary knowledge in their classrooms (Adler, 2008; Grant, 2003; Levstik & Barton, 2001). These factors, when considered within the viable and growing demographic imperative (Banks, 1995; Dilworth, 1992), prompt a better understanding of how teachers can and do purposively act to include the experiences of linguistically and culturally diverse communities within the school curricula (Franquiz & Salazar, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

With little doubt, pre-service teachers come to their university teacher education programs as well as their classrooms with pre-molded conceptualizations of their identity as classroom teachers (Grossman, 1995; Joram & Gabriele, 1998; Lortie, 1975; Ross, 1987). As Feiman-Nemser and Remillard noted, "the influence of schooling is especially strong. Future teachers spend thousands of hours in elementary and secondary school watching what teachers do and developing images about and dispositions toward teaching, learning, and the subject matter" (1996, p. 65). Lortie (1975) described this influence as the "apprenticeship of experience" from which teachers develop a deep set of tacit beliefs about the nature of teaching, learning, and schooling. "In the case of student teachers, cultural myths structure a particular discourse about power, authority, and knowledge that heightens individual effort as it trivializes school structure and the agency of students" (Britzman, 2003, p. 223). Reliance on one's apprenticeship of experience may normalize the status quo and inform practice in a way that fails to challenge the school culture and power internalized by cultural myths. However, pre-service teachers' prior experiences or understandings of why and how to teach may be more confronting of the curriculum (Salinas & Casto, 2010; Sullivan, 2007) and thus create more critical and multicultural democratic education opportunities for students (Marri, 2005).

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While notions of identity are instrumental in understanding teacher curricular enactment, equally compelling are notions of teacher cognition. Teaching is inevitably linked to what teachers think, how they utilize their knowledge system, and how these cognitions are translated into action (Borko & Putnam, 1996). Shulman's work has been instrumental in examining the development of a teacher's learning base and the change from learner to teacher that can "elucidate subject matter in new ways, reorganize and partition it, clothe it in activities and emotions, in metaphors and exercises, and in examples and demonstrations..." (1987, p. 13). Awareness of teachers' responses exposes an array of decision points including "the pedagogical grounds for selecting one under some circumstances and others under different circumstances" (Shulman, 1986a, p. 9) and consequently attends to content, cognition, and context (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005).

A flurry of research has accompanied Shulman's attention to teacher cognition and in particular his notion of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)—"in a word, the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others" (1986b, p. 9). For example, Hughes' (2005) work on teacher staff development and technology integration found that innovative technologies were integrated into practice only if they were determined by teachers to be valuable within their existing understanding of pedagogical content knowledge. Similarly, Carpenter, Fennema, Peterson, and Carey (1988) found that math teachers' understandings of students' problem solving skills consequently furthered their understanding of their own PCK, while Hill, Ball, and Schilling (2008) have suggested a conceptualization of PCK termed mathematics knowledge in teaching (MKT) (see also Mishra & Koehler, 2006) and technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPCK). Van Driel, Verloop, and de Vos, (1998) have concluded that science teachers' knowledge of content serves as an important precursor to the development of their PCK and Magnusson, Krajcik, and Borko (1999) further ascribed PCK in the science education with five components including: orientations toward science teaching, knowledge and beliefs about science curriculum, knowledge and beliefs about student understanding of specific science topics, knowledge and beliefs about assessment in science, and knowledge and beliefs about instructional strategies for teaching science. Grant's (2003) case study of high school social studies teachers characterizes "ambitious teachers" as those teachers who know their subject and their students and how to create the necessary spaces regardless of policies that may work to constrain. Furthermore Swan and Hicks (2007) argue that PCK is greatly influenced by social studies teachers' stances towards the purpose of the field. These qualifications do not turn attention away from pedagogical content knowledge but instead reveal the inevitable significance of content or disciplinary knowledge.

Grossman (1995) concludes that teachers' subject matter knowledge has been shown to influence how teachers represent, explain, develop activities, and teach about the nature of knowledge in the content areas. Thus and finally, pre-service teachers conspicuously have predispositions to the subject matter including the

nature of the subject, how it should be taught, and its significance to the overall school curriculum (Angell, 1998). Wineburg and Wilson (2001), in their work with social studies teachers, conclude that teachers' "disciplinary backgrounds wielded a strong—and often decisive—influence on their instructional decision making" (p. 140). Notably, teachers have certain views about the nature and purpose of their content area, if not understandings of ideology, power and control in their subject areas. In the field of social studies, for example, Levstik and Barton (2001) call for a more humanist approach to teaching history that promotes reasoned judgment, an understanding of the multiple ways of being human, and earnest deliberation. In calling for the teaching of history for the common good, Levstik and Barton argue that at least four stances currently exist in the teaching of history that articulate an identification, rationalization, exhibition or moral positioning within historical narratives. The four stances emerge in dominant and often problematic historical themes including individual achievement and motivation as well as stories of national freedom and progress (see also Adler, 1984; Evans, 1989, 1990; Goodman & Adler, 1985).

In the field of social studies, the questions, "Whose knowledge is it?" "Who selected it?" "Why is it organized and taught in this way?" "To this particular group?" (Apple, 2004, p. 6) remains publically noticeable and highly contested. The knowledge presented in the official social studies curriculum and promoted through textbooks, state standards, and pre-packaged curriculum units reflect "a particular bundle of silences" (Trouillot, 1995, p. 27) created by "the uneven contribution of competing groups and individuals who have unequal access to the means for such production" (p. xix). Consequently, the social studies curriculum epitomizes the ideology, goals, and knowledge of dominant social groups and plays a significant role in determining what and how history is recounted, remembered, and understood in classrooms. Social studies curricula also provide fertile ground for helping pre-service teachers and accordingly their future students understand how narratives are constructed and how counter (Salinas & Casto, 2010) or reciprocal histories (Cornbleth & Waugh, 1995) can be used to develop more complex, inclusive, and meaningful historical narratives.

Conceptual Framework

We frame the research question—how do pre-service social studies teachers come to understand their disciplines as a way to challenge the power structures and institutional practice which inhibit the realization of democratic ideals?—around the notion of intellectual biography. As Shulman explains, a teacher's "intellectual biography" represents "that set of understandings, conceptions, and orientations that constitutes the source of their comprehension of the subjects they teach" (Shulman, 1986b, p. 8). We examine *that set* within the understandings and actions of a critical pedagogue or one that seeks to disrupt traditional ways of thinking and forms of knowledge. Analyzing a teacher's intellectual biography may become a

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way to recognize and act upon the dominant ideologies reinforced and reinscribed on subordinate groups through the technical or official curriculum. Therefore, teacher preparation programs that provide explicit consideration and thoughtful development of ones' intellectual biography provide opportunities to expose how knowledge is constructed and regarded in particular disciplines.

Methods

As secondary teacher educators work to prepare pre-service teachers to be critical pedagogues, what becomes particularly important is helping them examine the manifestations of their intellectual biographies upon their discipline. Thus, as social studies teacher educators, we purposefully created opportunities to help our pre-service teachers uncover and extend their understandings, conceptions, and orientations of the subject they teach. This study employed an instrumental collective case study design (Stake, 1995, 2005), in which we were interested in gaining insight into how pre-service teachers understood and used knowledge in their content area to engage students in critical pedagogy.

Context of the Teacher Education Program

This qualitative case study was situated within a pre-service program in large university in the Southwest. The two-semester social studies coursework emphasized a more critically conscious (e.g., race, class, gender, religious, etc) approach to teaching the social studies. Students reflected upon their stances and predispositions to teaching the social studies (Barton & Levstik, 2004), the ways in which teachers circumvent teaching critically (Epstein, 2009), and the ways in which the social studies curricula is distorted and misrepresented (Loewen, 1995; Wills, 1996). The course had an added emphasis on historical thinking—as “a cultural act that teaches students about warrants, about the nature of understanding, and about their role in making historical knowledge” (Stearns, Seixas, & Wineburg, 2000, p. 3). Historical inquiry provided a way to use primary sources and document based questions that would promote multiple perspectives (Salinas, Blevins, & Sullivan, 2012), counter narratives (Salinas & Sullivan, 2007), divergent historical funds of knowledge (Seixas, 1993) and opportunities to disrupt seamless narratives (a sense of absolute truth), and referential illusions (omnipotence of the narrative) of textbooks (VanSledright, 2002; Wineburg, 2001). *The Student as Historian Project* (<http://ows.edb.utexas.edu/site/student-historians>) was the culminating course project that allowed pre-service teachers to become aware of the problematic nature of the official social studies curriculum and explore ways to introduce *others* into the school curriculum. As such, this project was a focal point for this particular study.

Participants

The 2008-2009 secondary social studies methods cohort included 22 pre-service

teachers. The three purposefully selected participants included in this study were selected because they demonstrated a more critical ontological and epistemological understanding of historical inquiry.

The first participant Lynda (pseudonym), identified herself as a second generation Latina (of Mexican origin), was a History major, and focused her *Student As Historian Project* on the Armenian Genocide. As Lynda states in her opening narrative of her project:

The importance of recognizing and contending with past genocides should not be overlooked. The present-day Turkish government may fail to recognize the Armenian Genocide because they may want to look to the future rather than the past, and other nations like the United States may be concerned about present and future diplomatic relations with such a strategically located country. However, examining the past and understanding the injustices inflicted on such a large number of people is a necessary component for ensuring the end of such brutalities.

Lynda's counter or reciprocal narrative points to the ways in which particular historical events can be rationalized to achieve pre-selected and self-serving ends. Using a variety of primary source documents including photographs, participant accounts, official government memorandums, and political cartoons, Lynda encouraged students to construct their own, well-informed and evidence supported reasoning of this event.

The second participant, Wilma (pseudonym), was an African-American woman and also a history major. Wilma centered her project around the Lavender Scare, the period of history between 1945-1969 in which homosexuals enlisted in the military were openly and violently persecuted because of their sexuality. In the opening narrative on the website, Wilma suggests, "this website gives readers a chance to analyze and judge how far gay rights have come, how much further there is to go and if they really matter." Wilma's use of primary sources and document-based questions, sought to trace the historical evolution of a contentious political and social issue and highlight its connection within larger persistent historical debates.

Carlos (pseudonym), the final participant was a history major and Latino male. Carlos chose to explore the enduring and continuous influence of African-American women on the civil rights movement by examining the work of Ida B. Wells and Rosa Parks. In his *Student as Historian Project*, Carlos argues that students do not have a extensive sense of the experiences of African Americans in the long civil rights movement (Hall, 2005), suggesting:

There is a long history in this country of powerful civil rights movements, especially in the Black community. So what do we gain by limiting it to the 1960's, an era barely covered at the end of American History courses? The true story of the Black Civil Rights Movement needs to be taught because it shows how people change over time.

Carlos' opening statement demonstrates a deeper understanding of how confining

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the civil rights movement to the 1960s distorts and deemphasizes the historical agency of the African American community (Wills, 1996).

Data Collection and Analysis

Each of the projects described above provides a backdrop for examining the knowledge sources these pre-service teachers used in engaging in critical multicultural education within the social studies. The three informants participated in two hour long and digitally recorded interviews that explored their student as historian projects, personal and professional identities, understandings of critical issues such as race, class, gender, and religion, as well as their knowledge of social studies content.

We manually coded transcripts, interviews, and artifacts, including participants' Student as Historian website, and analyzed them as Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest by noting patterns and themes, arriving at comparisons and contrasts, and determining conceptual explanations of the case studies. For example, we noted a continuum of curricular and pedagogical enactments that reflected importance and sources of teacher knowledge (Cornbleth, 1985). Teacher knowledge was further refined into the three results including experiential, official, and counter knowledge. The patterns, themes, and comparisons of interview, observation, and artifact data lead us to the findings included in article paper.

Results

By tracing pre-service teachers' intellectual biographies for this project, we examined the content notions they found problematic, flawed, incomplete, and/or inadequate in their prior learning and their use of critical content knowledge in articulating a response (Shulman, 1986b). In analyzing the data, we found at least three bodies of knowledge that were particularly important in pre-service teachers' understandings of critical historical inquiry and subsequently their curricular and pedagogical decisions. The sources of knowledge included their experiential knowledge and understandings, their official disciplinary knowledge, and their knowledge of counter perspectives. Experiential knowledge is informed by social studies teachers' personal experiences outside of school, including their interactions with family, friends, neighbors and colleagues as well as their previous schooling experiences. The second body of knowledge, official knowledge (Apple, 2000), is drawn from teachers' knowledge and interactions with things such as national, state, and local standards, district wide scope and sequence, textbooks, narratives told in their own schooling experiences, as well as the media. Finally, emancipatory knowledge highlights subjugated knowledge, or the stories and histories that have been suppressed and disqualified by certain social and academic gatekeepers, (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997) in an attempt at making conscious the oppressive practices of the official curriculum and knowledge.

Experiential Knowledge in Relation to Content

Initially it becomes important to explore how teachers' experiential knowledge shapes their understandings of teaching and content—in this case, social studies. Teachers file away and retrieve experiences that help inform what and how to teach (Britzman, 2003; Evans, 1990; Lortie, 1975). The participants in our study conceptualized their experiential knowledge in two ways. First, their experiences reflected a critical orientation, and secondly, they were able to tie these experiences to their understandings of teaching and learning in the social studies.

In articulating their experiences, the participants made connections between curricular omissions and what these omissions meant to them as learners and as teachers. In Lynda's case, her prior high school experiences afforded a unique opportunity for her to see how alternative, often subjugated perspectives could be introduced into the traditional curriculum (Kincheloe, 2001). Commenting on a particularly formative experience during her high school years, Lynda said:

In high school I had a teacher who had us read *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. It was one of those moments when I was like wow. She only had us read a few chapters, but I read the whole thing. It was fascinating to see that perspective. There was also another project I will never forget. She had us study protest songs, not only just dove songs, but hawk songs as well. I got *Blowing in the Wind*. Those kinds of things really helped open up my eyes to different perspectives and ideas.

Lynda's comment, in many ways, reveals her ability to extend this learning experience to broader historical, political, and social representations of *others* that address issues of power and privilege. Though this might not be the only experience that informed her understandings of the social studies, it does give us a glimpse into these experiences she found particularly salient to her work.

Unlike Lynda, who was exposed to critical issues in high school, Carlos did not experience these notions until he began his undergraduate studies:

It didn't happen till college. You get to question in college. You get to experience. It wasn't a class, so much as my experience as a college student. Coming to campus, coming out, looking at the history of the gay and lesbian movement. Why didn't I know about all of these people. That is what opened my eyes. Then I joined the group Queer People of Color. And became a leader of that group. Then that kind of began my interest in what are we teaching and what we are not teaching.

Carlos' involvement in campus based political organizations and his growing consciousness portrays the connection he made between curriculum and the active engagement of young citizens in considering the inclusion and exclusion of *others*.

Wilma's experience in her social studies methods coursework helped her to understand the consequence of curricular omissions. For instance, Wilma described one methods coursework activity that informed her thinking about what and how to teach:

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We talked about why we teach social studies. When I saw the stances (Levstik & Barton, 2001), I was like that is me. Before I knew why I wanted to teach social studies, but I couldn't articulate it. But when I saw it on a piece of paper, I was like "that is it, that is why I want to teach about racism, classism, and sexism in history." And it made me feel better, like I thought I might be doing something wrong, but this showed me that I could teach the way I wanted to teach.

Wilma aligned herself with the notion that we can only understand the present by tracing the development of social patterns and process over time.

A teacher's intellectual biography is inherently rooted in those past experiences that inform, influence, and emerge in defining their understandings of content and pedagogy. In making sense of their own K-16 school experiences, the three participants revealed their intentions to use history as a way to reveal our nations' historical, yet persistent struggle with race, class, and gender. As such, these selected experiences positioned them to confront and push against the grain of traditional schooling patterns, particularly those found in social studies classrooms.

Official Knowledge: Knowing and Questioning the Metanarratives

While experiential knowledge may foster important dispositions for critical pedagogues, what becomes essential is their knowledge of the substance and ideological nature of the traditional school curricula. As Wills suggests, the sanctioned social studies curriculum is missing, "meaningful representations of the actions and interactions of diverse groups and individuals as agents, actors, and subject in US history and society" (2001, p. 59). The participants in this study were quite conscious of the problematic nature of this official curricula in at least three noteworthy ways.

First, the three participants had a great awareness of both official and unofficial histories that are prevalent in schools (McLaren, 1998). Wertsch notes in his work in Estonian schools there is a pattern among students of "knowing but not believing" (the official history) and "believing but not knowing" (the unofficial history) (2000, p. 44). That sense of knowing but not believing the official history played a major role in our participants' understanding of what and how to teach. Describing her own history education experience, Wilma said:

In high school, I remember one of my history teachers said we are not going to talk about Africa because they did not have an effect on the world...the world affected them. I remember he looked at me when he said this—because I represent all Black people—a whole continent. I knew there was something not right about the whole thing, even though I didn't know a lot of African history. It is a big continent, there has to be some history that is valuable.

Though Wilma typifies a successful student of history in the sense that she did well and "mastered" the official content knowledge, she also resisted appropriating this knowledge by distancing herself from the official curricula (Wertsch, 2000). This resistance also influenced her views as a pre-service teacher, encouraging her to trouble the official knowledge presented in the social studies curriculum.

Secondly, the participants recognized how dominant groups controlled the production of official hegemonic knowledge. Hegemonic knowledge is produced/reproduced by dominant groups through a process in which knowledge becomes canonized or commonsensical to the point that most people do not even question its validity (May, 1998; McCarthy, 1993). In contrast, Lynda referenced the uneven treatment of particular historical narratives, noting:

I feel that these bigoted notions of history are deeply imbedded in the curriculum. We have taught history from the perspective of those in power. Reading Howard Zinn, I was like wow this is great, it should be the people's history. We should know about the underdog and how they felt. All of that stuff has attracted me to wanting to use historical thinking and teach social studies more critically.

Lynda recognized how the traditional curriculum highlighted dominant narratives while excluding subordinate narratives. But more importantly, she was cognizant that she could resist these hegemonic forces and work to create oppositional perspectives.

Thirdly, participants identified the consequences of traditional social studies textbooks and standards. For example, Carlos had yet another understanding of how the dominant social studies curricula relegated others not only into subordinate positions but also into spaces that made them invisible. He argued that the existing official knowledge had unfortunate implications for those people who were not in power:

What we get in the traditional curriculum is not history; we are leaving out a significant portion of people. We say we are this melting pot, or this big conglomeration, but we don't talk about others, instead they just become part of the us.

In critiquing the melting pot metaphor, Carlos' comments highlight what historian David Lowenthal (1998) describes as the *history/heritage* divide. The *heritage* narratives so often promoted in the official history curriculum present a celebratory picture of the past that attempts to create a common culture of "us." In actuality, however, these narratives do not represent complete or accurate historical accounts (Aldridge, 2006; Loewen, 1995).

Kincheloe (2001) described social studies teaching that works towards critical enlightenment as involving both critique of and reflective encounters with dominant thinking and contemporary social studies information. Indeed, the three participants in our study had an explicit addition to their intellectual biography that revealed an understanding of the oppressive stature of the official curriculum and a commitment to disrupt this transmission of hegemonic knowledge (Salinas & Casto, 2010).

Emancipatory Knowledge: Enacting the Counter Narrative

Though the pre-service participants were leery of the official curriculum and desired to move beyond traditional historical portrayals, what distinguished them was their knowledge of alternative perspectives. Wertsch (2000) makes the argument that it is possible to doubt official narratives and believe them incorrect, while

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at the same time not having the deep knowledge necessary to counter them. The participants in our study not only doubted the official curricula, but they also had knowledge of other unofficial perspectives. The topics and issues Wilma, Lynda, and Carlos chose to address in their *Student as Historian Project* were representative of their understandings of other, often counter narratives.

Describing her choice of the Lavender Scare as the topic for her *Student as Historian Project*, Wilma said:

I knew that doing Black history would be expected of me, as the only Black person in class, so I decided to do gay and lesbian issues. So I asked my partner what he wanted to do and he said—how about the new deal. I said we talk a lot about the new deal. I was like how about don't ask don't tell, maybe we can talk about gay and lesbian history in the military. Then he was like will there be a lot of information on that? And I was like well that's kinda the point. Then I remembered the Lavender Scare and I thought this would be interesting. He kept suggesting stuff already included in the curriculum but in the end I wore him down.

Wilma's choice demonstrated both her recognition of the limited coverage of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer issues in the social studies curriculum (Thornton, 2010) and her ability to historicize the contemporary discussion surrounding the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. Thus, not only did Wilma recognize the many shortcomings of the official curriculum, but she also had the knowledge necessary to confront this reality by connecting the past to the present.

Remarking on her choice to highlight the Armenian genocide in her *Student as Historian Project* Lynda said:

Last year I read an article about how half the world does not even recognize this event as genocide. My whole thing with genocide is that the Holocaust is the only thing that gets talked about, but what about the other genocides. I remember one of my students, when we were doing a lesson on the Holocaust, said we already know about this, we talk about the holocaust every year. So hearing that I was like we should probably be talking about other genocides, like the Armenian or Cambodian genocides. I guess my whole thing is why doesn't the US recognize it as genocide...it's a political decision.

Lynda's comment demonstrates her knowledge of why historical events are manipulated and consequently omitted from the traditional social studies curricula. As such, Lynda's *Student as Historian Project* sought to expose students to a broader understanding of the political nature of historical narratives and the way they are used to justify acts of colonization, marginalization, aggression, oppression, etc. Finally, Carlos used his *Student as Historian Project* to highlight women in the Civil Rights movement. Explaining the reason behind this choice, Carlos said:

We talk about Rosa Parks, we talk about Martin Luther King Jr., but we talk about civil rights movement only in the 1960s. Granted that was a big part, but it was the culmination of a hundred years of work. We wanted to emphasize it didn't just

spring up and happen, this was going on, people were pushing it, people were talking and doing this kind of activist work for a long time. We talk about the myths around Rosa Park specifically. But also Ida B. Wells, this woman faced lynching multiple times in her life and was run out of a town for reporting it. She was there when the NAACP was founded; she was traveling through Europe giving speeches. But why don't we hear about this stuff?

Carlos not only wanted to debunk several of the myths that shaped the traditional civil rights movement narrative told in most social studies curricula, but he also wanted to help students understand the tireless struggle African Americans faced in gaining equal rights. In both challenging the conventional Rosa Parks story and pushing Ida B. Wells to the forefront of the 'confined' civil rights timeline (Wills, 1996), Carlos encouraged his students to see that the civil rights movement was the result of an long standing struggle of African Americans' fighting against racism and oppression. Like Lynda and Wilma, Carlos was conscious of curricular omissions and distortions and had knowledge of alternative renditions of history that allowed him to challenge these oppressive narratives.

For the participants in this study, it was the composite of three bodies of knowledge that proved to be particularly relevant to their abilities to conceptualize "school knowledge as historically and socially rooted and interest bound" (McLaren, 1998, p. 196). Recognizing that knowledge is neither neutral nor objective, Lynda's, Wilma's, and Carlos' intellectual biographies then reflected an understanding of how historical inquiry could be used to disrupt the unequal and oppressive representations of race, class, gender, etc. in the school curricula. It is the recognition of experiential, official knowledge, and emancipatory knowledge that affords pre-service teachers a foundation by which to enact a more deliberative and transformative rendition of history, language arts, science, and mathematics and so forth.

Discussion

Ultimately, as teacher educators, we were interested in understanding how elements of one's intellectual biography might foster a more critical pedagogical and social justice orientation through content knowledge and curriculum enactment. In this case study we found that what teachers do and do not know about their discipline has great implications for whether they will adhere to or contest the official curriculum as well as other inequitable schooling practices. While it is imperative that critical pedagogues recognize the problematic nature of the official curriculum, it is their knowledge of *other* perspectives that allows them to trouble the curriculum in meaningful ways. This means that critical pre-service teachers must not only engage in "knowing but not believing" the official curriculum, but that they must also believe in and know the alternative accounts that are often silenced (Wertsch, 2000).

Consequently, as teacher educators, we must first create reflective spaces that

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help pre-service teachers uncover and critically evaluate their intellectual biographies and its role in their thinking about the disciplines they teach. Unpacking experiences and understandings allows for the detailing of expectations regarding curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and so forth. Furthermore, situating the conversation within the disciplines can yield those explicit ideological stances that can determine how a young teacher will conceive of the nature and legitimacy of knowledge of a content area (Stanley & Longwell, 2004). Within these methods course discussions, exploring ontological and epistemological assumptions becomes paramount to how and what teachers decide to include and/or exclude from the unofficial curriculum.

Additionally, we can fashion learning opportunities like the *Student as Historian Project* that foster dialectical understandings in which the school curricula is exposed as hegemonic and meriting of resistance on the part of classroom teachers. Projects of this sort build upon students' understandings of themselves but are coupled with a critique of how knowledge is created and canonized within the official curriculum (Banks, 1993) and require the use of a pedagogical approaches that are more inclusive –and perspective taking (Thornton, 1994).

Finally, students are then challenged to insert other perspectives. In the end, pre-service teachers are given an opportunity to challenge and modify their own understandings, conceptions, and focus of the subjects they teach. Understanding *other* knowledge is pivotal and all too often difficult to develop. Our practices tend to silence or avoid (Epstein, 2009) rather than develop a repertoire of narratives that can be used to confront, counter and present more socially just oriented kinds of considerations.

Therefore, teacher education programs should strive not only to recognize the bodies of knowledge that shape teacher's intellectual biographies, but also actively seek to promote coursework and field experiences that make explicit a pre-service teachers' sociopolitical understanding of their content, characterize the disempowering and reproductive nature of the curriculum, and insert a broader and more inclusive content knowledge. As Howard (1999) so aptly notes, "We can't teach what we don't know." As our informant, Carlos confessed, "content knowledge is one of my hesitations. I don't know that I have the history knowledge to talk about these things. A lot of this stuff is so new to me, how do I think critically about these historical events that I am just learning about?" It is not simply enough to have particular experiences and dispositions that are critical; teachers must also have the content knowledge that allows them to transfer these experiences and dispositions to meaningful learning opportunities. This ability to help pre-service teachers transfer these understandings becomes central to the work of teacher educators.

Conclusion

As such, pre-service teachers should be given the space to reflect on the experiences they bring with them to their preparation programs and reflect on the ways

in which their intellectual biography shapes how they think about teaching and learning in their content areas. It then becomes imperative that teacher educators introduce new ideas and perspectives as a way of expanding and refining prospective teachers' sense of knowledge. Finally, pre-service teachers need opportunities and support to apply this new knowledge in their teaching practice. We acknowledge that a teacher's intellectual biography is not static, but is rather constantly changing and growing as teachers interact in the field with their students, colleagues, and content. Certainly we recognize that we provide only a brief snapshot of the intellectual biography of pre-service teachers and recognize that interrogating and adding to this biography is a lifelong endeavor. It is our hope, however, that the process of reflection and growth these future teachers were engaged in during their pre-service years will sustain a focus on critical pedagogy and social justice.

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