

Out of the Classroom and Into the City: The Use of Field Trips as an Experiential Learning Tool in Teacher Education

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Abstract

This article explores the researcher's use of field trips as an experiential learning tool in a social studies methods course as a pilot study. The researchers analyzed course evaluations and student reflection papers using document analysis to determine (a) the positive and negative aspects of utilizing field trips during the course, and (b) the ways the field trips advanced or limited pre-service teachers' learning. The findings indicate that students found the field trips to be worthwhile but had concerns about the time and distance. They were able to make important connections to course content but reacted negatively to the inclusion of diversity in the field trips.

Keywords

experiential learning, social studies education, teacher education

As the cost of college education increases, there has been an increased emphasis on the quality of instruction in higher education (e.g., Commission, 2006). Moreover, with an increased emphasis on teacher quality in K-12 classrooms, more attention has been placed on teacher education programs and the training and skills that graduates receive to meet the needs of all children when they enter the teaching profession (e.g., Putman, Greenberg, & Walsh, 2014). Teacher educators must consistently examine and evaluate their practice to ensure that they are producing teachers who will be able to meet the demands of the teaching profession.

In teacher education, experiential education, such as field experiences, has been widely used to enhance the learning of students and prepare them to be effective teachers (McGlenn, 2003). Classroom teachers also use experiential education, typically in the form of field trips, to expand the school curriculum (Kisiel, 2003). Experiential learning is a teaching strategy that provides concrete experiences to learners to aid their understanding of content, ideas, and concepts (A. Y. Kolb & Kolb, 2005). In the form of field trips, experiential education has been shown to positively influence the achievement of children and youth, such as helping students learn multiple perspectives and access content in novel ways (Marcus, 2008). Moreover, field trips provide children a unique context within which to transfer previous knowledge and acquire new knowledge (Nadelson & Jordan, 2012). Such learning contexts help children recall material learned and provide a high level of engagement and enthusiasm (Nadelson & Jordan, 2012). Thus, learning how to capitalize

on field trips is an important part of teacher education and should receive greater attention as a teaching practice.

Experiential learning through field trips is one way teachers can incorporate specific content into the curriculum while providing a unique and challenging learning setting for children. Public school teachers do not teach content independently or in isolation; rather context standards provide a framework and guide for what should be taught in classrooms. Teachers, typically, have some autonomy on how to help children meet standards in their states. It is important that teachers have the ability to plan learning experiences based on content standards so that children can have maximum benefits from the experiences.

Within teacher education, various types of experiential learning help pre-service teachers gain valuable skills outside of traditional lectures and seminars (Caires, Almeida, & Vieira, 2012; Olgun, 2009). Experiential learning in teacher education commonly includes practicum experiences and student teaching; through these forms of experiential learning, pre-service teachers gain hands-on experience with teachers, students, and administrators in schools (Matsko &

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Hammerness, 2014; McDonald, Kazemil, & Kavanagh, 2013). Other forms of experiential learning, such as field trips and service learning, can also be effective experiences for pre-service teachers (Zeichner, 2010).

This article addresses one teacher educator's (first author) effort to implement field trips in a social studies methods course aimed at helping pre-service teachers gain a deeper understanding of course content while also modeling teaching methods that pre-service teachers might replicate with their own future students as a pilot study. The course was taken by students enrolled in a teacher licensure program during the 2010 summer term. The majority of the students were White females with three White males enrolled in the course. The course met at a suburban satellite of the main campus. The teacher educator identifies as an African American female and was a graduate assistant at the time the course was taught. The teacher/researcher decided to include an experiential education component to make the course more enjoyable, to give pre-service teachers access to the wealth of resources surrounding the university, and to model good teaching practices. Because this was the teacher/researcher's first attempt at incorporating experiential learning in a social studies methods course, she thought it would be beneficial to examine students' perceptions of the course, specifically with regard to the field trip components. The research questions that guided this inquiry were as follows:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What do elementary pre-service teachers report as positive and negative aspects of field trips taken in their social studies methods course?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): How did the field trips help or hinder teacher candidates' learning of the course material?

Theoretical Framework

Experiential learning is an approach that allows learners to create knowledge through the cycle of transforming lived experience into current patterns of thinking (D. A. Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning theory was popularized by Kolb and includes four modes of learning: concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC), and active experimentation (AE). CE and AC are the two ends of a learning continuum; CE is the ability to be involved in new experiences and make observations without bias, and AC is the ability to "create concepts that integrate observations into logically sound theories" (D. A. Kolb, 1984, p. 30). RO and AE are also polar opposites on a continuum; RO is the ability to observe and reflect on experiences from different perspectives, and AE involves using knowledge to solve complex problems. According to D. A. Kolb (1984), the learner must become adept at using all four learning modes. Figure 1 illustrates the four phases of D. A. Kolb's (1984) learning cycle and shows how learners can

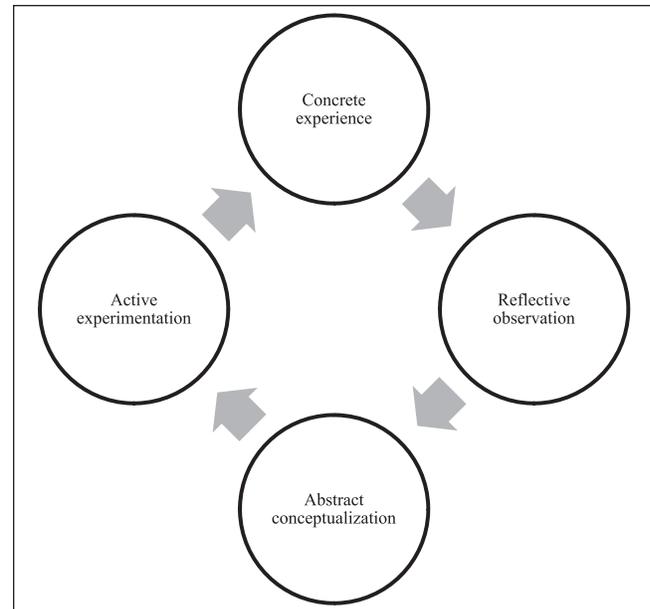


Figure 1. Kolb's Learning Cycle.

Source. Adapted from D. A. Kolb (1984).

Note. Four phases of Kolb's learning cycle.

move from one phase to the next. According to D. A. Kolb (1984), all four learning modes are critical for student learning, although the mode that students begin with in the cycle can vary (see Figure 1).

This framework is appropriate for this pilot study because it illuminates the specific components that are necessary for experiential learning to be successful for learners, specifically reflection and a connection to previous understandings. Although the actual learning experience is critical, the other components of the cycle are also necessary to ensure that the experience is meaningful and results in the formation of new knowledge. D. A. Kolb's (1984) framework defines and places equal emphasis on all four parts of the learning cycle, so the framework is a useful tool to objectively critique the implementation of a new experiential learning component in a course.

Literature

In reviewing the literature, the researchers identify two relevant bodies of research: experiential learning in teacher education in the form of field trips and curriculum standards that lend themselves to experiential learning. Demarcations in the teacher education literature come mainly in the various examples from undergraduate, graduate, and teacher education students in different methods courses; however, the overall studies examined suggest that regardless of the level or program, experiential learning can be a critical experience that deepens and empowers student learning. In this section, the researchers review published literature in each area.

Field Trips in Teacher Education

Teacher educators have successfully used field trips to enhance pre-service teachers' teacher preparation. The field trips were planned for different purposes and as a part of a variety of courses. For example, Johnson and Chandler (2009) describe the process of secondary mathematics pre-service teachers in a mathematics methods course attending a field trip to a battleship to plan an informal learning experience connected to math content for high school mathematics students. Through the experience, the pre-service teachers were able to plan for informal learning activities with their future students and make concrete connections to mathematics content. Johnson and Chandler (2009) noted that the pre-service teachers described the field trip as a fun, real-life application and a break from the normal routine.

In a social studies course, Yeşilbursa and Barton (2011) published results from an investigation that included a field trip to a local museum as a focus on heritage education, which is an approach to teaching history and culture using community sites and resources. They found that all of the enrolled pre-service teachers liked the trip and were able to make connections to heritage education. Moreover, they made connections to their future teaching practices by sharing their desire to use heritage places as teaching tools. The teacher candidates also saw the value of historic sites in teaching because they are concrete and make history interesting.

Similarly, in another content area, Tal (2001) reported on a field trip that 13 pre-service science teachers attended as part of a science methods course. Reval (2001) found that the pre-service teachers who participated in the single, full-day field trip found the science learning environment enriching and useful for teaching children content and improving engagement. Moreover, Reval (2001) described the necessity of reflection to enhance the teaching and learning process when field trips are used.

The Learning Process Using Field Trips

Field trips are also beneficial for pre-service teachers because of opportunities the experiences provide for them to make real world connections and engage in an authentic learning process. Several studies demonstrate how field trips were used as a part of the learning process for pre-service teachers, including constructivism, reflection, and content knowledge.

Constructivism is a framework heavily emphasized in teacher education courses, and Broome and Preston-Grimes (2009) designed their study to assist pre-service teachers in their understanding of constructivism. The pre-service teachers gathered information about a field trip site through in-class projects and completed a chart that detailed what they knew and wanted to learn (K-W-L chart) to document their prior knowledge and to generate specific questions for the trip.

Reflection, a component of experiential education, is also an important teaching strategy for children. Broome and Preston-Grimes (2009) and Pence and Macgillivray (2008) both included reflection components in their field trips with students. After the trip designed by Broome and Preston-Grimes (2009), the pre-service teachers utilized reflection to discuss larger issues such as political, social, and economic trends that emerged. Pence and Macgillivray (2008) also stressed the importance of reflection as part of the learning process during their study, where 15 American teacher education students taught Italian children for 4 weeks in Rome, Italy. The authors noted that student reflection was critical to help students debrief and troubleshoot the challenges they encountered. In both instances, the researchers found that reflection helped the pre-service teachers make stronger connections to course content and grow professionally. More important, in both studies, the researchers followed a model of a learning process that their future students could replicate with their children in the future.

Content knowledge is typically a major component of course work that pre-service teachers take. Leinhardt and Gregg (2000) engaged in a learning process with their pre-service teachers to help them increase their content knowledge and attitudes toward the history from the Civil Rights Era. The pre-service teachers completed a web-making activity before their trip to a civil rights museum and repeated the activity after the field trip. Guided discussions were also woven into the experience. The authors found that, on average, pre-service teachers doubled the quantity of information they recorded on their webs, with more than half of the pre-service teachers tripling the amount of details included. Thus, the field trip combined with additional learning activities and discussions proved beneficial in meeting the objectives of the course.

Overall, these articles demonstrate that field trips can be used successfully to assist pre-service teachers in meeting course goals including enhancing their understanding of constructivism, engaging in reflection to make deeper connection to course content, and mastering content knowledge.

Curriculum Standards

According to the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (NCSS), there are 10 social studies themes that should be included in the curriculum (National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies [NCSS], 2010). These 10 themes include culture; time, continuity, and change; people, places, and environments; individual development and identity; individuals, groups, and institutions; power, authority, and governance; production, distribution, and consumption; science, technology, and society; global connections; and civic ideals and practices. The standards for teaching social studies are based on these 10 themes; thus, it is important that teachers are able to embed them in course content, activities, and discussions (Golston, 2010; Herczog, 2010).

Because culture is a central theme in social studies, many teacher educators use social studies methods courses as a locus for multicultural education and issues of diversity. For example, Fitchett, Starker, and Salyers (2012) contend that integrating a culturally responsive paradigm in social studies methods can increase future teachers' aptitude for working with diverse students in the future and increase their cultural competence. Heritage education, a study of history and culture focused on material cultures and built environments, can also be included in social studies education (Hunter, 1988). Material cultures and built environments are artifacts, buildings, historic sites, values, ideas, and traditions that have been passed from one generation to the next (Hunter, 1988). Yeşilbursa and Barton (2011) discussed the importance of helping teachers and students take ownership of local historic sites, artifacts, and traditions. They merged the study of history, another major theme in the social studies, with historic places, cultural landscapes, buildings, and artifacts, both written and pictorial.

The social studies course for the present study included content for young children; thus, standards from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) are relevant to the pilot study. NAEYC standards for early childhood teachers suggest that teacher candidates gain content knowledge and develop a large repertoire of teaching methods to help children construct knowledge (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2009). According to the NAEYC (2009), teacher candidates must have experiences in their methods courses, including social studies, that will enable them to "use their own knowledge and other resources to design, implement, and evaluate meaningful, challenging curricula that promote comprehensive development and learning outcomes for every young child" (p. 15). Mindes (2005) posits that social studies instruction should be child-centered and allow for varied projects and activities, such as field investigations and visits to local community resources.

The review of literature suggests that experiential learning in higher education has been successfully implemented for students. Moreover, national standards suggest that teacher candidates acquire tools that will enable them to create meaningful social studies experiences inside and outside of the classroom. Because experiential learning, specifically field trips, have been shown to be beneficial, researchers should document and share their personal efforts to implement similar activities. The studies in this review included field trips in teacher education courses that included a single trip as a part of the course. This pilot study is different in that the course took place over the summer (5 weeks), and the teacher educator embedded three field trips plus an independent excursion in the course. These differences may allow for replications in other teacher education programs.

Method

This pilot study follows a case-study design. The focus was on the experiences of students and the teacher/researcher in a single college course. The teacher/researcher recognized the value of a course study after she received the course evaluations; thus, she designed and implemented the pilot study a posteriori. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was granted after the conclusion of the course and gave the researchers permission to evaluate course evaluations and course materials. In total, 17 course evaluations were completed. Although IRB was granted, the researchers asked for consent from the students to analyze and include their reflection papers.

Participants

The participants constituted a sample of convenience and consisted of students enrolled in the social studies course taught by the researcher. There were 24 students enrolled; three of the students were male and 21 were female. All of the students were White except for one student who was of Middle Eastern descent. All students participated in field trips and field trip reflections as part of the course requirements. Each student had the opportunity to complete a course evaluation per university procedures and guidelines. Because the course evaluations were collected anonymously, no participant data are available other than their enrollment in the course. Five students gave permission for their reflection papers to be analyzed. These participants included one male and four females, all of whom are White.

Course Context

The social studies teaching methods course that was the basis for the present pilot study was taught at a public university in a major city in the northeastern United States. The university serves about 30,000 undergraduate students and has multiple campuses. The College of Education serves about 3,000 students, most of whom are teacher licensure students. The main campus is located in the city, while two satellite campuses are located in the surrounding suburbs. Because of the location of the university, several community resources were available for experiential learning activities. These resources include historical sites, museums, historic churches, and national parks.

The course addressed issues and methods in teaching elementary social studies for grades nursery through 6. The emphasis was on teaching for understanding and investigating resources and curriculum in social studies. Experiential education was not a main focus of the course although the teacher/researcher chose it as a teaching strategy. This course provided a detailed examination of the content and methodology needed for teaching history, geography, and the social sciences in the elementary school curriculum. Furthermore,

it sought to develop the students' appreciation of the interdependence of cultural groups and use of inquiry and problem-solving methods to understand the historic, geographic, social, and economic dimensions of an interconnected world society. These themes were very important to the teacher educator and are an important part of NAEYC standards.

The teacher/researcher incorporated experiential learning through a series of three required class field trips and one independent excursion. Pre-service teachers attended three field trips in the local city that focused on American history and culture. The teacher/researcher selected these trips in advance of the course so that appropriate arrangements could be made. Following each trip, the pre-service teachers wrote a reflection paper based on guidelines that can be found in Appendix A. The pre-service teachers also selected a site to visit independently with no more than two other classmates.

Field trip 1. The first class field trip was a visit to a replica of the Niña. The trip included a guided tour of a historically accurate replica of the Niña and a view of the Pinta, two ships that Columbus sailed in the late 1400s and early 1500s. According to the Columbus Foundation (2012), the Niña is a replica of the ship on which Columbus sailed across the Atlantic on his three voyages of discovery to the new world, beginning in 1492. Columbus sailed the ship more than 25,000 miles and was last heard of in 1501. The new Niña is a floating museum that visits ports all over the Western Hemisphere. This trip was chosen because it was directly related to colonial history and available in the area for only a short time.

Field trip 2. The second field trip was a visit to a historic African American church founded in the late 1700s. In addition to a guided tour of the actual church grounds, the students visited the archives contained in the lower level of the building. There was also a small museum that the pre-service teachers were guided through. This trip was connected to the course because it (a) celebrated the history of African Americans before, during, and after slavery and (b) contained a variety of primary sources that could be used to aid in the construction of history.

Field trip 3. The third field trip was a visit to a church and burial ground that is an important landmark connected to the United States' Revolutionary War history. Many signers of the Declaration of Independence attended the church, and many notable figures are buried in the burial ground. This field trip was connected to course content and discussion about colonialism and the Revolutionary War. Attendance at the burial ground was required, but a visit to the church site was optional.

Independent excursion. In addition to the three class field trips, pre-service teachers were required to choose an excursion based on their own interests. They could visit a museum,

cultural center, or historical site. Pre-service teachers were required to meet or speak with a docent, museum guide, or other administrator to learn about program offerings for school-aged children and youth (based on guidelines that can be found in Appendix B). It was recommended that pre-service teachers choose a location that was related to their final project, which was a unit plan (a field trip for their students was a required component of the unit plan). They were given a class day to conduct their independent excursion, and no more than three pre-service teachers were allowed to visit the same location. Some of the pre-service teachers chose to visit sites that were close to their homes, while others visited sites that were in the same city as the class field trips.

Data Sources

To answer the research questions, this pilot study focused on pre-service teachers' reflection papers and their course evaluations. In addition to student reflection papers and student course evaluations, the researchers collected course materials including the course syllabus, assignment guidelines, and course notes for analysis.

Data Collection/Procedures

The teacher/researcher administered formal course evaluations at the end of the semester using approved university-wide procedures. The university posted course evaluations from all participants via a web-interface that the teacher/researcher could access. After the conclusion of the course, the teacher/researcher contacted students via e-mail to ask for consent to use their field trip reflection papers and independent excursion reflection papers. Five students gave consent to have their reflection papers analyzed for potential publication. These papers were available to the instructor via Blackboard. There is no link between data set by respondent due to anonymous course evaluations.

Data Analysis

The researchers examined all anonymous student comments included in the course evaluations and isolated all comments directly related to the field trips. There were a total of 169 anonymous comments from 13 different students who specifically addressed the field trip portion of the course; a small number of course evaluations included no comments. Anonymous comments from each student were separated as a part of the course evaluation process. The researchers compiled all relevant comments into a new file for later analysis. Five pre-service teachers in the course gave consent for their reflection papers to be included in the analysis.¹ These student reflections were read multiple times to gain an overall sense of the students' experiences.

The researchers entered the isolated course evaluation comments and the student reflection papers into Qualitative

Table 1. Overview of Categories and Codes.

Theme	Code	Sample comment
Constructive components of field trips	Worthwhile	<i>I think this trip was worthwhile because of how accurately the ships were built, the experiences was very authentic, and real.</i>
	Memorable	<i>Having heard their qualifications, specifically, and the content of their presentation, has given me a renewed appreciation for older folks in general.</i>
	Knowledgeable	<i>I found the high level of education, qualification, and experience of our guides to be most enlightening.</i>
Unfavorable components of field trips	Distance	<i>I would rather the field trips be local. We had to travel to [the city] once a week and that costed us extra money [sic].</i>
	Choice of trip	<i>The field trips chosen were biased in that somehow African culture was the main focus.</i>
Field trips foster replication for future teaching	Replication	<i>I would definitely take a similar trip with my own students, and as many like it as possible.</i>
	Extension	<i>Given the opportunity and interest, I might even have students engage more fully in the sailor's lifestyle.</i>
Field trips advance social studies knowledge	Understanding	<i>Just being in the historic area is enough, but going to the burial grounds can give students a glimpse into the past.</i>
	Opportunities	<i>Social studies topics present students with a great opportunity for hands-on learning and curricular infusion that will ultimately increase their overall knowledge.</i>
	Culture Fun	<i>I think it is important to experience other religions, which this field trip allowed me to do. This trip enhanced my appreciation and understanding of social studies because social studies was never really that fun for me.</i>

Data Analysis (QDA) Miner software for a more formal analysis. QDA Miner is a qualitative data analysis tool that allows researchers to code and annotate text documents. The researchers used open coding to analyze the data. Initially, the researchers applied 13 codes to the students' course evaluation comments and reflections, such as cultural bias, extension, and choice of trip. She then read all documents a second time once all codes were determined. Second readings revealed several comments that corresponded with the 13 codes that were identified during the first readings. The third reading of the data provided an opportunity to collapse the 13 codes down to four, which were more theoretical themes that illustrated broader nuanced meaning. These four themes are (a) constructive components of field trips, (b) unfavorable components of field trips, (c) field trips advance social studies knowledge, and (d) field trip experiences foster replication for future teaching. These themes will be discussed in the section "Findings." An overview of themes and codes can be found in Table 1.

Findings

In this section, we discuss the four themes that emerged from the data analyses, including (a) constructive components of field trips, (b) unfavorable components of field trips, (c) field trips advance social studies knowledge, and (d) field trip experiences foster replication for future teaching. This section is organized around the research questions with exemplar quotes to help illustrate the theme.

What Do Elementary Teacher Candidates Report as Positive and Negative Aspects of Field Trips Taken in Their Social Studies Methods Course?

Overall, teacher candidates reported both positive and negative aspects of the field trips. Positive aspects included tour guides' knowledge, the uniqueness of the field trips, and pre-service teachers' ability to make connections to social studies course content. Negative components were the time and money necessary for the field trips, in addition to the perceived bias toward specific racial groups.

Constructive components of field trips. According to student evaluations and reflection papers, there were several positive aspects about using field trips as experiential learning opportunities in the course. The positive comments were mostly written in the reflection papers. Generally, the pre-service teachers found the field trips to be worthwhile and memorable, and they reported that they gained new knowledge. The pre-service teachers also found the tour guides knowledgeable. Below are several exemplary quotes that illustrate ways in which pre-service teachers thought the field trips were positive.

On this trip, I learned a lot of interesting facts that I never knew before.

This statement suggests that the field trips filled a gap in knowledge for this pre-service teacher regarding important

historical events. One particularly memorable piece of knowledge was that the tar pitch used in the construction of the Niña is the same substance described in the construction of Noah's Arc of the Bible. Another interesting fact the students found fascinating was that the crew of the Niña consisted of adolescent boys who slept above deck and were consistently exposed to saltwater and harsh temperatures.

I think this trip was worthwhile because of how accurately the ships were built, the experiences were very authentic, and real.

This comment reveals that this pre-service teacher values learning experiences that are real and authentic. Indeed, the creators of the Niña were very precise in their construction of the ship, down to the tools used for construction. This care and precision helped to create an experience where the pre-service teachers could actually travel back in time and experience the Niña as it was in the 1500s.

I was unaware, even, of the existence of the cemetery; the whole experience was new.

This quote shows how the trip to the church burial grounds served to fill a gap in knowledge of local educational resources. There are many local resources that can be used to aid in the development of social studies knowledge, and exposing the pre-service teachers to some of these resources was a major goal of the course.

As I mentioned, I'm more present minded, and therefore had no knowledge whatever of local black history, nor local history of any color, that I did not read in a textbook.

This quote demonstrates how this field trip raised the consciousness of this pre-service teacher about (a) the presence of local historical sites, and (b) African American history and culture.

I found the high level of education, qualification, and experience of our guides to be most enlightening.

This comment suggests that tour guides' knowledge is an important factor for teachers to build confidence in the historical facts. When students see their instructors and leaders as knowledgeable experts, they are able to connect more in depth with the experience and ask relevant questions that will aid in their learning. Thus, having knowledgeable tour guides is an important component of a successful field trip experience.

Overall, the comments suggest that the pre-service teachers appreciated the opportunity to experience something new and different. Moreover, the comments suggest that the trips had a greater impact on their learning than previous traditional educational experiences. There were positive aspects mentioned from all three required field trips and from the

required independent excursion visit. Not only did students experience something new and different, they also gained an appreciation for resources in their community. Thus, the trips served to help the pre-service teachers learn social studies content in a manner that was memorable and engaging, and they learned about potential resources they could use to enhance their own teaching.

Connecting these comments to D. A. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning framework, the pre-service teachers had experiences that could be built upon through reflection to aid them in their learning of social studies concepts. These comments do not suggest, however, that the pre-service teachers progressed through all four phases of the learning cycle. The pre-service teachers did the required reflections, but the comments do not suggest that they integrated their experiences into new understandings about social studies teaching methods (AC) or used the experiences to solve problems (AE). Some teacher candidates made connections to their future teaching, but the connections were vague and lacked details that would demonstrate deep understanding.

Unfavorable components of field trips. The pre-service teachers expressed positive comments about the field trips, yet they also shared unfavorable aspects about their experience. These negative comments were mostly found in the course evaluations. The codes in the negative category included, "time," "distance," "choice of trip," and "cultural bias." Consistent with previous studies in the literature, several pre-service teachers mentioned the distance from the classroom to the trip sites as problematic. Below are student perspectives on the limitations of the field trip:

Make a couple of the field trips closer to [the university].

I think it is very inappropriate to have our field trips in [the city] when we are all [suburban] students.

These comments suggest that these pre-service teachers who attended classes in a suburban setting found traveling to the city for field trips to be problematic. This might mean that they lacked an understanding of the value of visiting the city if they did not plan to teach in an urban area. The second of the two comments also suggests that one pre-service teacher thought his or her future students would not be interested in or benefit from trips to an urban city center.

I would rather the field trips be local. We had to travel to [the city] once a week and that costed [sic] us extra money.

This comment suggests that the burden of traveling was problematic for this pre-service teacher; probably due to gas and parking. Admission to sites was free for pre-service teachers, and they were encouraged to carpool. Several pre-service teachers chose sites for their independent excursion that were close to their homes for the visit they selected,

which further indicates that distance was a barrier. However, other students returned to the city for their independent excursion. This action shows that some of them were open to exploring resources outside of their immediate community and possibly their comfort zone. The distance to the field trip sites required travel time and money for parking, although no sites were more than 30 miles from the assigned class location.

More troubling, however, are the comments that suggested the trips were biased toward African Americans.

I felt some of the field trips were geared toward African Americans and their history.

This comment, although seemingly neutral, was written in the course evaluation as a critique as evidenced by the comment section it was included under (What aspects of the course distracted from your learning?). This comment implies that the inclusion of African American history was a negative aspect of the course. This pre-service teacher does not feel connected to African American history or believe it is important for inclusion in the course.

The field trips chosen were biased in that somehow African culture was the main focus.

This pre-service teacher's comment suggests that too much course content was focused on African American history. He or she did not offer a suggestion on other histories to include in the course content.

All trips were highly focused to African American heritage.

This pre-service teacher suggests that a negative aspect of the course was a focus on African American history and culture. This comment demonstrates a lack of awareness of the importance of knowing the histories of different cultural groups as a teacher.

These concerns were only expressed in the course evaluations after the conclusion of the semester; therefore, the teacher/researcher was unable to address these concerns during the class. Research indicates that White pre-service teachers are sometimes resistant to the inclusion of diverse themes in college courses (Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). This could explain why students perceived too much emphasis on African Americans. Moreover, because the teacher/researcher identifies as African American, this could have enhanced the feeling of bias the students felt. Nevertheless, pre-service teachers should be reminded that African American history is American history and, thus, is important for everyone to examine at some point in their academic careers. As future teachers, it is very likely that they will interact with African American students. Having knowledge of these students' histories and culture could increase their effectiveness and ability to teach in culturally responsive ways (Cruz, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Culture is a main

strand in the social studies standards; inclusion of African American culture in a social studies methods course is necessary to cover recommended content (NCSS, 2010).

How Did the Field Trips Help or Hinder Teacher Candidates' Learning of the Course Material?

The data suggest that the field trips helped the pre-service teachers to make concrete connections to course content, specifically pedagogical knowledge about pre-colonial, colonial, and antebellum history. The pre-service teachers were also exposed to local African American history and culture. Moreover, the data suggest the field trips helped some teacher candidates to consider how they might include experiential learning with their own students. Because the pre-service teachers noted bias in the selection of the field trips toward African Americans, it is possible that the field trips hindered their learning and acceptance of diversity and culture.

Field trip experiences foster replication for future teaching. The future actions category included comments that alluded to pre-service teachers' desire to incorporate aspects of the field trips into their future teaching. The codes in this category included "replication" and "extension." Many pre-service teachers commented that they would take their students on a similar field trip, although they understood that their students' ages and maturity would be an important factor.

As to whether I would take my students on a similar trip, it would depend upon the students.

This pre-service teacher does not seem to be completely sold on the specific trips he or she experienced in the course. Some excursions, such as the trip to the historic church, may be inappropriate for very young children while others, such as the trip to the Niña, may be better suited for youngsters. This quote shows this pre-service teacher is open to trips so long as they are in the best interest of the students he or she teaches.

I would consider taking my class on this trip, because it was so informative and real.

This quote shows that this pre-service teacher was very enthusiastic about the trip to the Niña. He or she is very open to the idea of incorporating this type of experience with his or her future students.

I think that the museum would be appropriate for the students that I plan to teach because I plan on teaching around third or fourth grade and at that age.

This pre-service teacher commented on his or her independent excursion to a museum in the city. He or she chose this site based on the grade level and content for a third or

fourth grade classroom and found it very useful. He or she is very open to the museum site for future students.

Just being in the historic area is enough, but going to the burial grounds can give students a glimpse into the past.

This pre-service teacher's comment suggests that he or she saw the value in exploring the historic areas in the city, even if no tour was specifically planned. He or she felt the trip to the burial ground was an added bonus to an area already rich with history that could be explored.

It is important to note that not all schools have resources to send students on field trips. Other opportunities exist for exploring community resources such as virtual field trips. Teachers can share their own experiences with students, along with photographs and artifacts. Even though schools differ in their ability to provide trips for students, if teachers see them as important, they can still offer experiences to students.

Several students provided ideas for extending the field trips with additional activities and lessons with their own students. The two trips the students were able to connect most easily with were the trip to the Niña and the trip to the burial ground.

Given the opportunity and interest, I might even have students engage more fully in the sailor's lifestyle.

This pre-service teacher is considering additional activities that might go along with the trip to the Niña. The guides gave a lot of interesting facts and details about the sailors that this pre-service teacher thinks may be worth exploring with his or her future students.

The students could write journals as someone from that time, or make a fact book about their job, and what it entails.

Again, this pre-service teacher considered the trip to the Niña and how it could be extended. Infusing reading and writing was important to this pre-service teacher because of its strong focus in the early grades.

For kids to grasp this concept it would be fun for them to build a small replica of the ship, after doing research, and visiting these life size replica ships.

This pre-service teacher sees an opportunity to connect social studies content based on the Niña trip to mathematics and engineering. Concepts such as scale, measurement, and weight would be necessary to include to create replica ships. This is an example of a hands-on activity that would be very appropriate for children.

Doing my unit plan on colonial America this would be a great field trip to take students on because of the historical content of the trip.

This pre-service teacher sees a connection between the burial ground and a unit on colonial America that he or she planned as a course requirement. He or she sees the value of helping students learn historical content in a unique setting.

The pre-service teachers were able to make connections between their experiences at the field trip sites and their future teaching. Many of them seriously considered ways to incorporate similar experiences with their future students by providing concrete examples of extension activities. The use of field trips helped the pre-service teachers see the benefit of experiential learning in the teaching of social studies content and think about how they might extend similar trips with additional lessons and activities.

Field trips advance social studies knowledge. The final category included pre-service teachers' comments that relate to teaching social studies, engaging students in social studies activities, or learning social studies. These codes included, "understanding," "opportunities," "culture," and "fun."

Several students mentioned in their reflection papers how the trips enhanced their knowledge of social studies.

My understanding of social studies has been enhanced in that I now see the discipline as more dynamic.

This comment shows how the field trips made social studies come alive for this pre-service teacher. Indeed, social studies can be taught in a variety of ways such as through textbooks and worksheets or interactive experiences. This pre-service teacher saw how social studies can be more interactive and dynamic than he or she previously realized.

The trip enhanced my understanding of social studies in that it can be taught almost anywhere as any location.

This pre-service teacher notes how social studies does not have to be confined to the classroom. With a little planning, he or she realizes that social studies can be brought into many experiences and taught in non-traditional ways.

Social studies can be found all around and it can be affordable and meaningful, which I discovered through this field trip.

This pre-service teacher discovered that there are many local sites and locations that can be used to assist in the teaching of social studies. Many local resources are free and/or low-cost, especially for schoolchildren.

This trip enhanced my appreciation and understanding of social studies because social studies was never really that fun for me.

Social studies should be taught in a way that is fun, dynamic, and engaging. This pre-service teacher saw firsthand that field trips are a way to bring social studies content to life.

While on the trips, the pre-service teachers also learned interesting facts that helped to build their social studies content knowledge.

I don't know much about Columbus, only that he sailed in 1492 and has a very controversial national holiday named after him. On this trip, I learned more about his background and the hardships he encountered throughout his voyages.

This pre-service teacher explained that the information shared by the tour guide during the trip to the Niña helped him or her learn more about Christopher Columbus besides the common facts that most people know (i.e., Columbus sailed with three ships in 1492). This memorable experience will enable him or her to teach more thoughtful, engaging, and authentic lessons to students.

Seeing things firsthand is exactly what helps to shape our own memories, ideas, and knowledge base.

This pre-service teacher expressed the importance of taking ownership of knowledge through firsthand accounts and experiences.

It is important for both students and teachers alike to utilize the educational resources that are right in their own communities, particularly when they are lucky enough to live outside a city that is so rich with history and opportunities for hands-on-learning.

It is easy for teachers to get caught up in the day-to-day ins and outs of managing a classroom and preparing lessons. This pre-service teacher expressed the importance of using community resources to enhance students' learning. Teachers will not use community resources if they are not aware of them. The use of field trips helped this pre-service teacher to become more aware of the resources that surround schools and communities and potentially opportunities to use them in his or her own teaching.

Discussion

The findings indicate that the pre-service teachers found the field trips to be worthwhile and beneficial. Consistent with previous research, experiential learning in the form of field trips was received positively by pre-service teachers (Broome & Preston-Grimes, 2009; Johnson & Chandler, 2009). The participants found the trips to be memorable and were able to make connections to course content and teaching methods. As a result of the trips, some pre-service teachers explored extension activities and the possibility of similar trips with their future students. Nevertheless, the data do not suggest that the teacher candidates progressed through all four phases of D. A. Kolb's (1984) learning cycle to gain the most knowledge and understanding from the field experiences.

The findings also suggest that field trips are a way to include local history and culture in course content and culture in the social studies curriculum. According to Yeşilbursa and Barton (2011), it is important that heritage education be a part of the social studies curriculum; this includes historic places and cultural landscapes. Indeed, the city was rich with resources, which the pre-service teachers discovered throughout the course. Culture is central to the teaching of social studies, and the field trips were a great way for pre-service teachers to learn about different aspects of American culture, such as colonial life and African American traditions. Although reflections were required, the instructor should have done more to ensure that the pre-service teachers could see the value in learning about alternate historical perspectives, specifically African Americans'. According to D. A. Kolb (1984), concrete experience involves the ability to experience new situations without bias. More preparation on the part of the instructor could have aided the teacher candidates in achieving this part of the learning cycle.

The pre-service teachers expressed concerns about time and distance. This challenge was also found in non-teacher education courses that included experiential education components (Dardig, 2004; Gill, Adams, & Eriksen, 2012). Anticipating concerns about hardships the trips might cause, all pre-service teachers were notified about the trips prior to the beginning of the course, and a few students chose to enroll in a different section. Moreover, because the allotted class time was 4 hr per session, the teacher/researcher was able to provide time for travel to and from the suburban campus. Nevertheless, distance and time remain a challenge to successful implementation of experiential learning experiences in college courses, particularly when sites are selected by the instructor.

The most surprising finding is that some teacher candidates reacted negatively to the inclusion of diversity in the field trips. One of the field trips included an African American historical site, yet the instructor did not connect the trip to pre-service teachers' prior knowledge nor allow them to reflect on why such a trip was important. Some of the pre-service teachers, therefore, did not see the relevance of the trip or make personal connections. The reflection papers were all positive, but the anonymous course evaluations revealed that some of the pre-service teachers perceived that the trips focused too much on African Americans. Incidentally, only one of the three trips was focused exclusively on African American history; the other two trips focused on American history as traditionally defined (e.g., Eurocentric). Fitchett et al. (2012) posit that social studies remains a topic that is heavily influenced by Eurocentric and Westernized ideas, even in the midst of a changing student demographic.

According to social studies standards, it is critical that future teachers have knowledge and appreciation for perspectives that are different from their own, which is why the trip to the African American church was included (NCSS,

2010). Social studies teachers must not only be able to identify and understand alternate perspectives, they should be able to help children to consider alternate perspectives (NCSS, 2010). However, it appears that some of the pre-service teachers were resistant to the inclusion of diverse themes. Research by other scholars indicates that short-term experiences are not sufficient to improve attitudes toward diverse cultures; a more formal and structured approach is necessary (Fitchett et al., 2012; Langer, Escamilla, & Aragon 2010; Tidwell & Thompson 2008). Specific teaching methods that might have helped the pre-service teachers to see the importance of diverse themes and experiences include structured class discussions encouraging divergent views (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002) and making concrete connections between the field experiences and the pre-service teachers' lives (Sevier, 2005), and reviews of social studies standards that include culture and diversity. It is critical that future teachers appreciate and value the inclusion of alternate perspectives and histories within social studies.

Methodological Limitations

There are several limitations of the pilot study. One of the limitations includes the availability of data sources. Additional data sources, such as interviews, post field trip activities, and documented class discussions would have added to the reliability and triangulation of the data. The teacher/researcher, however, did not plan the pilot study until after the course ended and the course evaluations were posted. Thus, it was impossible to generate data after the fact. Similar studies should make an effort to include stronger data sources.

Other limitations of this pilot study include the small sample size and the limited number of reflection papers included for analysis. As with most qualitative studies, the results are not generalizable to larger contexts. A teacher educator with a similar course context and classroom makeup may find different results. In addition, the small number of reflection papers included for analysis may not have been representative of the entire class. Had more pre-service teachers given permission for their papers to be included, additional themes may have emerged that could affect the findings. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the course evaluations ensured that all pre-service teachers' views were represented. Moreover, course evaluations may be more authentic than reflection papers because course evaluations are ungraded and not reviewed by the instructor until after grades have been posted. There was no pre-test or post-test given to participants. Follow-up studies should include a pre- and post-test to confirm the findings.

Conclusion

Field trips can be an effective way to implement experiential learning in teacher education. In social studies education, field trips are particularly useful because they can coincide with course content, particularly social studies standards and

multiculturalism. It is vital that teacher educators consider their students when designing field trips; some pre-service teachers may not immediately see the purpose for certain experiences, particularly if they are not aligned with their personal histories. Teacher educators must not only provide time for reflection, but must also make concrete connections for pre-service teachers so they gain the greatest benefit from the field trips. Some pre-service teachers may be resistant, but it is critical that instructors embed diverse themes and histories of those who have been marginalized into their courses so that future teachers will better understand and be able to teach diverse students.

Recommendations for Future Research

The authors recommend that future research include more studies of teacher education courses that include an experiential learning component, such as field trips. These studies should include more robust research methodologies such as pre-post surveys, participant interviews, regular journal reflections, and documented class discussions. In addition, participation from a larger percentage of the class members would add to the integrity of future studies. Future studies into experiential learning within teacher education should strive to include the opinions and interests of the participants when planning activities. We also recommend briefing and debriefing discussions or activities before and after the experiential learning activities so that participants are fully aware of what to expect, the purpose of the activity, connections to course content, and have opportunities for reflection.

Appendix A

Reflection Paper Questions

1. Where did you go?
2. Did you generally find the trip worthwhile?
3. What did you learn or experience that was new to you?
4. Might you consider taking your future students on a similar trip? Why or why not?
5. How did the trip connect to your personal content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and/or pedagogical content knowledge?
6. How has the trip enhanced your understanding/appreciation of social studies?

Appendix B

Independent Excursion Reflection Questions

1. Was the museum appropriate for the students you plan to teach? Why or why not?
2. Was the docent, guide, or administrator helpful and knowledgeable in regards to student programming?

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1. All student course evaluations were included due to anonymous collection procedures per Institutional Review Board (IRB). Only reflections from students who gave expressed written permission for their course work to be analyzed were included in the analysis per IRB.

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