

“VOTING IS *POWER!*”: PRESERVICE SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS’ CONCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

This study revealed that having preservice social studies teachers engage in systematic reflection on democracy and citizenship led to an evolution of their conception of democracy. Nine participants at a large Midwestern university, enrolled in a social studies methods course, were asked to discuss, journal, and reflect about democracy and citizenship. These reflections served as tertiary artifacts (Wartofsky, 1979), which allowed for an examination of the praxis of democracy free from the norms of the material world. Grounded theory was used to develop examined patterns in participants’ initial and final conceptions of democracy. These patterns were analyzed using a second-generation activity theory model (Engeström, 1990) constructed using the work of Parker (2002), Westheimer, and Kahne (2004). The study revealed that participants’ conceptions of democracy increased in complexity over the semester. Lastly, participants were aware of the ontogenetic evolution of their conception of democracy.

Keywords: social studies, democracy, artifact use, activity theory, ontogenetic evolution, preservice teachers

The social studies classroom is one of the primary places in which students develop into participatory citizens (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Marker & Mehlinger, 1996; National Council for the Social Studies, 1994). Within the confines of the social studies classroom, the student is immersed into the study of the cultural-historical foundations of our vibrant democracy. This space allows students, as emerging citizens, to appropriate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to become participatory citizens (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Goodlad, 2008; Parker, 2002). Since democratic education is a purpose of the social studies classroom, it is important to consider the ways in which preservice teachers (PSTs) are prepared for their future role as modelers and promoters of democracy.

Teachers have an important task of preparing emerging citizens to be able to participate in all aspects of society (Darling-Hammond, 2006; James, 2010). How teachers conceptualize these complex and multifaceted concepts influences how they present these ideas to their students. Therefore, social studies methods courses should engage PSTs in activities that allow them to explore, refine, and reframe their own understandings of democracy (Trent et al., 2010).

Previous Research

Previous research provided interesting, albeit limited, insights into PSTs’ understanding of democracy. These studies focused on how PSTs view the concept of the good citizen (Martin, 2012), their role as citizens (Boyle-Baise, 2003), their understanding of democracy (Trent et al., 2010; Yeager & Van Hover, 2004), or their view

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of citizenship education (Kickbusch, 1987). Empirical studies on PSTs' conceptions of democracy and citizenship revealed some very important patterns. Studies have shown that PSTs held very narrow views of citizenship. Participants argued believed there were a limited number of actions citizens could take in a democracy beyond voting, being informed about current events, obeying laws, and when needed, helping others (Boyle-Baise, 2003; Kickbusch, 1987; Martin, 2012). Furthermore, these studies revealed that participants viewed the purpose of participation was to preserve the rights of citizens, but did not link this purpose to issues of tolerance, equality, or social justice (Carr, 2006; Carr, 2008; Iverson & James, 2009). Additionally, PSTs also noted that citizens should participate in service work in their communities but did not connect these activities to citizenship or participation in democratic society (Boyle-Baise, 2003; Martin, 2012). Lastly, participants tended to view democracy as something that had been achieved and should be celebrated (Carr, 2008). Previous literature demonstrated that the majority of preservice teachers' conceptions of democracy and citizenship fit within Parker's (2002) description of traditional citizenship education or Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) personally responsible citizen.

A limited number of studies have exhibited that PSTs might hold more complex conceptions of democracy and citizenship. Studies have found that some preservice teachers already hold complex conceptions of democracy. Some participants viewed democracy as a community, or a work in progress, one that requires collective effort by all citizens, and considered diversity as an essential aspect of democracy (Carr, 2006; Carr, 2008; Iverson & James, 2009; Ross & Yeager, 1999; Yeager & Van Hover, 2004). Other studies have found that when PSTs are given the opportunity to explore and reflect upon democracy, they develop more complex conceptions of democracy (Dinkelman, 1999; Dinkelman, 2000; Iverson & James, 2009). Thus, participants already held or developed more complex conceptions similar to Parker's (2002) description of progressive and advanced conceptions of citizenship education or Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) description of participatory and justice-oriented citizens.

Purpose of the Study

Prior studies of PSTs' conception of democracy revealed wide-ranging insights. These studies revealed that the majority of them hold a very traditional view of democracy (Carr, 2008; Trent et al., 2010; Yeager & Van Hover, 2004), and that they do not connect the concept of democracy to include active participation in their communities (Boyle-Baise, 2003; Carr, 2008). However, there is limited research on whether it is possible to foster a deeper conception of democracy among PSTs. Thus, this study aims to explore the possibility of fostering the development of a deeper conception of democracy. Based on this goal, the primary research question for this study is: Can the use of reflective practices in a secondary social studies methods course lead to the development of a complex conception of democracy?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in several bodies of literature. The first body of literature focuses on democracy as a cultural historical activity, which is grounded in second-generation activity theory (Cole & Engeström, 1993; Engeström, 1987, Engeström, 1990; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009; Sannino, 2011). Next, it is grounded in an analysis of artifact use described by Wartofsky (1979). Lastly, it builds upon Parker's (2002) description of types of citizenship education, and Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) typology of citizens created in social studies classrooms.

Democracy is a Cultural Construct

Democracy is more than a definition. The literature on democracy and democratic education presents multiple visions of democracy as an activity that citizens participate in at varying levels. Democratic participation can be viewed from the perspective of the individual (including the family) and the community (local, national, and global) (Barber, 2003; Gutmann, 1999; Parker, 2002). Each of these views presents differing visions of democracy as a cultural construct.

Under the perspective of democracy for the individual, the individual citizen acts to preserve his or her own private self-interest. In this process, citizens will act to preserve democracy in its current state, if it is in their best interest, or seek minimal changes to ensure the state of democracy that benefits them the most. The individual may hope that changes will benefit the majority of his or her fellow citizens, but he or she does not act out of a belief or faith in utilitarianism (Barber, 2003). This vision of democratic praxis focuses on the need for the individual to retain as much sovereignty as possible from the demands of the government and of their communities. This traditional liberal view of democracy bestows upon the individual the definition of citizen as

someone who elects representatives, who are then responsive to their constituents (Butts, 1980; Parker, 2002). Thus, the citizen engages in representative decision-making primarily through voting to preserve their individual benefits (Price, 2007; Urbinati & Warren, 2008).

The perspective of democracy for the community holds that the individual focuses on their needs and the needs of the community. Barber (2003) referred to this vision of democracy as strong democracy; thus, democracy is founded on the ideal of self-governing communities driven by the civic attitude to act with a common purpose (Barber, 2003). Citizens unite to meet the needs of their community due to a civic attitude: a willingness to work collaboratively despite differences. Thus, citizens can and should separate private self-interest from the needs of the community (public). Citizens engage in the activity of democracy because it is a way of life. Lastly, this vision of democracy accepts the politics of conflict and vibrant pluralism as essential aspects of democracy (Barber, 2003). The diversity of belief, race, gender, sexuality, religion, and ethnicity aids in the creation of common ground needed to address problems communities face.

Beyond Barber's (2003) description of thin and strong democracy, there are numerous visions of democracy (see Dewey 1916/2011; Price, 2007; Urbinati & Warren, 2008). The commonality among these visions is that democracy is an activity; a cultural construct with a cultural-historical origin. Therefore, democracy is an activity in which citizens, the subject of the activity, chose whether democracy's purpose (object) is to preserve the status quo, improve local communities, or achieve social justice (Parker, 2002; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Next, democracy has numerous culturally mediated artifacts, rules for participation and artifact use, several visions of how the labor of the activity should and could be divided, and a plethora of communities citizens inhabit (see Dewey, 1916/2011; Barton & Levstik, 2004; Gutmann, 1999; Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996; Parker, 2002; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Given the complexity of the activity, citizens in a democracy do not hold a specific or singular (limited) role or position within a democracy. Consequently, citizens act within a democracy, democratic institutions, and their community in numerous ways (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Gutmann, 1999; Parker, 2002; Parker, 2005; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Therefore, democracy is a vibrant activity with numerous objects, artifacts, rules for participation, communities, and division of labor (see figure 1).

Democracy as a Cultural Historical Activity

This perspective allows for a consideration of democracy as a complex cultural-historical activity, with multiple objects, various communities, a plethora of rules for participation and artifact use, and numerous ways in which labor is divided (see Figure 1). Subjects are influenced by the various foci of the activity and how these foci affect their perception of the object of participation (Engeström, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009). More importantly, this allows for a consideration that individuals and groups use artifacts in diverse ways depending upon the object of the activity (Chaiklin, 2003; Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; Veresov, 2004). Lastly, participation in particular activities influences individuals and groups to develop new beliefs, attitudes, values, conceptions, and skills: in other words, ontogenetic evolution occurs (Cole & Engeström, 1993; Rogoff & Angelillo, 2002).

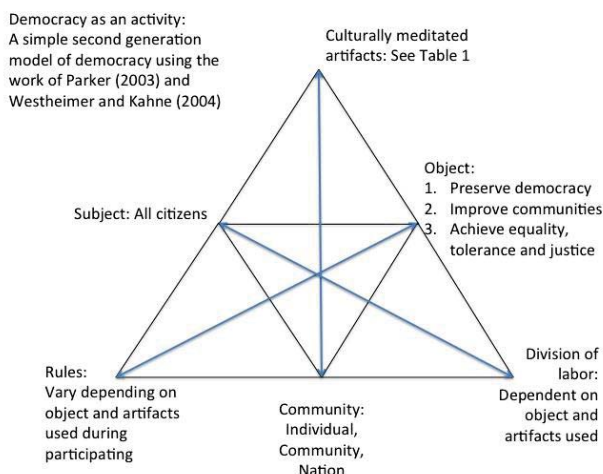


Figure 1: Democracy: A second-generation activity theory model

Artifact Use

Additionally, there are multiple types of artifacts (primary, secondary, and tertiary) that the subject may use to achieve an object of an activity (Wartofsky, 1979). Primary artifacts are artifacts used in the means of production of the material world. Secondary artifacts are used in “preserving or transmitting of skills, in the production and the use of ‘primary’ artifacts” (Wartofsky, 1979, p. 201). Lastly, tertiary artifacts are abstract representations of the praxis (specific mode of human action) and “constitute a domain in which there is a free construction in the imagination of rules and operations different from those adopted for ordinary ‘this-worldly’ praxis” (Wartofsky, 1979, p. 209). Tertiary artifacts allow the subject to enter into imaginary worlds free of the constraints of the rules, norms, values, or ontologies of the actual world (Cole, 1996; McDonald et al., 2005). Free of these constraints, the subject is able to use tertiary artifacts as a means of considering new uses of primary and secondary artifacts, which allows for possible changes in praxis (Cole, 1996; Wartofsky, 1979). Thus, the creation or use of tertiary artifacts might lead to the ontogenetic evolution of participants’ conception of the material world. For the purpose of this paper, we will only focus on the use of tertiary artifacts.

Parker/Westheimer and Kahne: A Heuristic

Given the complexity of democracy as an cultural-historical activity, the work of Parker (2002) and Westheimer and Kahne (2004) provide a heuristic (democracy as activity frame) for capturing the complexity of democracy and its culturally mediated artifacts. Parker’s (2002) typology of types of citizenship (traditionalist, progressive, and advanced conceptions of citizenry) examined the underlying philosophy behind educating students to become citizens. Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) typology of citizens (personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented) examined the types of citizen schools construct. The melding of these two typologies provides a heuristic for considering preservice teachers’ conceptions of democracy. It allows for a consideration of some of the tools and signs that citizens might use when engaging in the activity of democracy. Additionally, it allows for a consideration of the purposes of participation, albeit limited to three reasons for participation. This allows for a consideration of democracy as a multilayered activity that is both stable and fluid. It is important to note that this heuristic does not demonstrate the full complexity of primary or secondary artifacts used by citizens in a democracy.

Table 1: *Democracy as Activity Frame*

Democracy as Activity Typology			
	<i>Traditional/Personally responsible citizens</i>	<i>Progressive/Participatory citizens</i>	<i>Advanced/Justice-oriented citizens</i>
Actions of citizens (Primary artifacts)	Citizens: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vote for representatives • Have a universal set of political knowledge (including the functions of government) • Participate in their community (driven by self-interest) 	Citizens: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vote for representatives who work to improve local communities • Have knowledge of politics, culture, and economics • Use discussion and deliberation of public issues to solve problems • Participate in a variety of ways (volunteering, community service, and protesting) 	Citizens: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vote for representatives who work to address issues of social inequity • Are aware of the flaws in current cultural, political, and economic institutions • Deliberate and discuss controversial issues related to the politics of diversity and multiculturalism • Participate in their community to address the underlying causes of inequity (protests, marches, community service)
Purpose of participation (Tertiary artifacts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain the current political system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To solve local political, economic, or social problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create a more just society

Research Method

This study investigated how nine preservice social studies teachers attending a large Midwestern university conceptualize democracy as a complex, culturally mediated artifact. This study examined whether engaging PSTs in purposeful reflection including the use of tertiary artifacts could deepen their conception of democracy. One author was the instructor of record, the other was a nonparticipant observer of the course. The nine participants were enrolled in a social studies methods course, which I taught. The course centered on teaching PSTs how to construct curriculum with a focus on the teacher as a curricular gatekeeper (Thornton, 2005) and the use of backward design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). The demographics of the nine participants were three women and six men. Seven of the participants were Caucasian and two were African American. The participants in this study were recruited during the first week of the spring 2013 semester. This study used convenience sampling (Creswell, 2009). Participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity.

Research Design

This case study used concurrent mixed-methods research design in order to achieve complementarity of the data collected and to provide a more nuanced explanation of this social phenomenon (Greene, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). The use of the qualitative and quantitative data provided a fuller interpretation and understanding of the data collected (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Sutton, 2006; Jang et al., 2008). This allowed for a more complex understanding of the participants' conception of democracy.

As part of the social studies methods course, the participants engaged in several activities to determine their preliminary and final conceptions of democracy. This included a pre- and post-questionnaire, which were designed around systematic theoretic principles to obtain an accurate understanding of a respondent's position on an issue (Labaw, 1980). It was designed to elicit in-depth information and provide rich insights into participants' thinking (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999). The questionnaire had five sets of questions grounded in the theoretical work of Parker (2002), Westheimer and Kahne (2004), and Wartofsky (1979). Each set had two types of questions. The first question in each set required preservice teachers to reflect on their beliefs, values, and attitudes about democracy. These questions use a forced rank/sort format that provided qualitative data and quantitative data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999; Labaw, 1980; Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009). The second question in each set required the participants to briefly clarify their decisions using an open-ended question format.

The next instrument that was used to determine preservice teachers' initial and concluding conceptions was a photo elicitation activity. This elicitation activity was conducted during the first class of the course and during the last week of the course. Participants were organized into small focus groups of three participants (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009). Each group was given 25 images (see Appendix A) and engaged in a pile sort of the images to select 10 images that represented democracy. This required each group to reflect upon their personal conception of democracy, discuss their beliefs, and deliberate with others to develop a common understanding.

Participants also engaged in 16 weeks of journaling, in which they responded to quotations related to democracy and citizenship. The participants used an online discussion forum to post their personal reflection to the quotation and its application to their future classroom for 16 weeks. This process required the participants to examine their own understanding of democracy, the conceptions of democracy embodied in the quotation, and how they might teach their future students about democracy. Thus, the quotation served as a tertiary artifact. Next, journaling allowed participant to explore their own attitudes, values, and beliefs, and to construct new understandings through the text (Dyment & O'Connell, 2003; Hughes, Kooy, & Kanevsky, 1997). More importantly, this exploration of tertiary artifacts could lead to the appearance of primary contradictions (Engeström, 1987; 1990; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009) between the value systems held by individual participants and the value systems held by their peers and those embodied in tertiary artifacts. The resolution of primary contradictions can lead to microgenetic and ontogenetic evolution (Engeström, 1987; Engeström, 1990).

Lastly, four of the nine participants were interviewed at the end of the semester. The four participants were selected using convenience sampling. The interview protocol consisted of 12 open-ended questions that focused on participant's answers on the final questionnaire and on their perspective of examining democracy through discussion, journaling, and reflection.

Analysis of qualitative and quantitative data from this study occurred concurrently at the end of the semester. Descriptive statistics were used to reveal broad patterns in the changes in participant's conceptions of democracy from week-to-week. Using these patterns, the authors collaboratively coded qualitative data using grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2006) to create a set of 46 open codes (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), which included codes for responsible citizens, agency for change (or lack of it), political knowledge (or lack

of it), and voting as agency. These codes were condensed into five codes describing the qualities of citizens within a democracy (knowledgeable, participates, works for common good, moral, and democracy as a way of life). These codes were then used to conduct a second round of coding to reveal patterns within the qualitative data about democracy. Lastly, these patterns were then overlaid onto the democracy as an activity frame.

Findings

Initial Conception

The first important finding is that PSTs initially held fairly traditional views of democracy and the artifacts that citizens should use. Participants initially tended to focus on the knowledge citizens needed to use when participating and voting as the primary action for citizens to take. Furthermore, they put forth the purpose of using these primary artifacts was to preserve democracy and maintain individual rights and freedoms.

Artifacts

The majority of participants focused on the appropriation of knowledge as an essential artifact citizens use when participating in a democracy. Five of the nine participants noted they would spend more than 40% of the class time on traditional topics when teaching American government (see Table 2). They noted that they would focus on helping students understand their individual rights and responsibilities and acquire knowledge of the government. For example, one of the PSTs Susan wrote, "I placed more emphasis on understanding the government and individual responsibilities because they should know the legal system in order to implement change. I also placed greater focus on developing practical skills over learning the need to help. Students should be given the opportunity to apply the knowledge" (prequestionnaire). Thus, it is more important for students to acquire knowledge and possibly learn how to use that knowledge, than to learn to help other citizens." Another PST Ken noted, "I chose to favor certain objectives because it fit that learning individual rights and improving knowledge would be most beneficial" (prequestionnaire). Thus, according to these PSTs, knowledge of how the government functions and rights are what is most beneficial for students to learn. For example, the PST Nancy wrote, "Knowing how the government functions is important, especially in times of trouble" (prequestionnaire). During times of personal and collective crisis, citizens need to know how the government functions.

Table 2: *Percent of Time Spend on Each Objective in an American Government Class*

Objectives in an American government class	Prequestionnaire Average %	Postquestionnaire Average %
Individual rights and responsibilities	20.00	17.22
Knowledge of the government and its functions	20.00	16.67
Knowledge of local problems and solutions	13.33	15.00
Working on solving public problems	15.00	15.56
Need for social justice	14.44	17.78
Deliberating and solving public problems	17.22	17.78
Total	100%	100%

The other primary artifact of democracy participants focused on was voting. Participants tended to focus on traditional explanations of voting and the purpose of voting. Eight of the nine participants said that the purpose of democracy was the election of representatives (see Table 3), and all participants selected an image of a woman voting as the most representative image of democracy (see Appendix A for list of images)

Participants focused heavily on the role of voting as the primary method of participation within a democracy. For example, "Voting for officials is the core of our democracy" (PSTs Kara, Nancy, and Susan, photo-elicitation). Voting is the primary artifact for the creation of legislative bodies. Participants argued this gave citizens power and a voice in the government. For instance, Kara wrote "Voting is power! [participant's emphasis] It is part of check and balances and makes democracy fair" (prequestionnaire). Voting gives citizens the power to select representatives and checks the power of government. More importantly, allowing all citizens to vote creates a sense of equality. Participants tied the action of voting to issues of equality and diversity. For instance,

the PST Christopher noted, “Representatives run the democracy in America, and everyone should feel they are equal” (prequestionnaire). Voting is how democracy is recreated and maintained, and since all citizens have the right to vote, they have equality. The PSTs Matthew, Ken, and Connor wrote, “We have the freedom to vote and everyone has that right” (photo elicitation). Thus, having access to the ballot box was an essential form of equality among all citizens.

Table 3: *Descriptions of Democracy Prequestionnaire*

Descriptions of democracy	Ranked 1 st	Ranked 2 nd
Working with others to elect representatives	4	4
Working with others to solve issues of social justice	3	2
Working with others to solve local public problems	2	3
Working with others to preserve private self-interests	0	0

Purpose

Participants focused on the importance of using knowledge and voting to preserve individual rights and freedoms. Knowledge is used to preserve democracy. Christopher wrote, “When you talk to the average voter, many of them will give you their political beliefs but lack the evidence and support to back up their arguments. Overall, it hurts the overall democratic society when the future of a nation or government is in the hands of uninformed voters who are controlled by biases in the media” (journal, week one). Thus, the uninformed voter is a threat to the preservation of democracy because the media easily sways them. Participants argued it was important for all future voters to acquire the same set of knowledge. For instance, “I think what you said [Kara] about staying current is absolutely vital because students need to know the current facts of ALL [participant’s emphasis] the parties, not simply facts that their parents and friends tell them” (Marcus, journal week 2). Thus, without all of the facts, the voter is a threat to the preservation of democracy. The primary artifacts of knowledge about the government and current events are interconnected with the use of the primary artifact of voting.

Outliers...?

Some participants deviated from their peers in several ways. First two participants focused on the importance of teaching students how to use deliberation as a primary artifact of democracy. Edgar noted, “I want my students deliberating and working together,” and he would focus on having students engage in deliberation 35% of the time when teaching American government (prequestionnaire). Students need to know how to work collectively and to deliberate important issues. Additionally, Kara noted that she would spend 20% of the time in her American government class on deliberation. She argued, “Solving/deliberating issues got a higher percentage because it’s part of democratic civic participation” (prequestionnaire). Kara also deviated from her peers in focusing on issues of social justice.

Next, some participants deviated from their peers when they described the purpose of participation in a democracy. Kara noted, “The power belongs to the governed, and this means both minorities and majorities. If there is social injustice, it is the job of both parties to reach a reasonable conclusion to solve the injustices” (prequestionnaire). The purpose of participation was to preserve rights and to solve issue of injustice.

Final Conception

Participants’ conceptions of democracy and its artifacts shifted away from traditional perspectives of democracy. Participants continued to focus on traditional primary artifacts citizens should use. More importantly, they added new primary artifacts including new sets of knowledge and actions.

Artifacts

Participants shifted toward more progressive and advanced conceptions of knowledge and skills that students needed to be effective citizens. On the postquestionnaire, the participants shifted the amount of time they would spend on various objectives in an American government course (see Table 2). Additionally, five of the nine participants increased the amount of time they would spend on advanced conceptions of citizenship to 40%

or more. The participants decreased the amount of time on traditional citizenship topics by 6%, and increased time spent on progressive (2%) and advanced conceptions of citizenship (4%).

The participants shifted their focus away from knowledge of the government and politics toward knowledge of social justice and how to deliberate controversial issues. Four of the nine participants ranked working with others to solve issues of social justice as the most important (see Table 4). For instance, Kara wrote, “Social injustice makes our society unequal and equality is at the heart of democracy” (postquestionnaire). Thus, students need to learn about issues of social injustice in order to improve democracy. Chad noted, “Students should learn about social injustices because those are the things that are going on in the United States” (interview). Since injustices occur, students should learn about these issues. Kara noted that this was important to prepare students to be effective citizens because “students are entering into society in a way that they have more responsibility towards each other” (interview). The knowledge of social injustices allows students to understand and learn about their responsibility to each other. Furthermore, Chad wrote, “Students need to know proper deliberation skills and to know what local issues and social justice issues can be solved” (postquestionnaire). Chad stressed the importance of students knowing how to use the knowledge of social injustices. Chad furthered his idea by saying:

People need to work together to solve all of the problems. I mean poverty, schooling, education, things like that. People need to work together in order to find out these issues, and I think that is the most important because if people can’t work together on issues that are large, then what can they work together on? (interview).

Knowledge of these issues is essential for students and citizens to work together to improve democracy.

Table 4: *Descriptions of Democracy Pre and Post Questionnaire*

Descriptions of democracy	Prequestionnaire Ranked 1 st	Postquestionnaire Ranked 1 st
Working with others to elect representatives	4	2
Working with others to solve issues of social justice	3	4
Working with others to solve local public problems	2	3
Working with others to preserve private self-interests	0	0

Participants broadened their descriptions of primary artifact. Participants argued that students needed to know how to deliberate. Marcus wrote, “Deliberation and implementation is a huge part of civic participation, which is key for students to get involved” (postquestionnaire). Students need to know how to deliberate so they can effectively participate in the activity of democracy. Participants believed that by practicing deliberation, students would appropriate other skills of citizenship. Chad argued, “Students learn the skills of citizenship from deliberation. They learn to work with others to solve problems” (postquestionnaire). Participants expanded their conception of the artifacts of democracy to include deliberation.

Purpose

Participants also expanded their conception of the purpose of participation. Participants shifted away from the focus on the maintenance of democracy and the preservation of rights and responsibilities toward a focus on community and solving social injustices.

Participants shifted their purpose of participation from preservation of democracy to improving their local community. For instance, Chad stated, “Democracy involves a large community, and it’s this community feeling in order to do what is best for the community and that’s what democracy revolves around: what is best for the people. And that is what the community works for: what is best for everyone” (interview). The purpose of participation is to improve democracy by improving the local community. Additionally, this included shifting from having a national to local view of democracy. For example, Edgar argued, “Starting at the local level because local problems is the first step in understanding a bigger picture. . . . I feel like in order to really help students and help

people understand their significance, they need to get involved in the local public sphere and really work to make changes” (interview). In this process, he believed his future students would see that they are needed members of the community and democracy. Lastly, participants believed teachers should promote this purpose of democracy. Christopher said, “You can be an active participant in a democracy by serving the community. Students need to look at the issues in their community . . . strategize ways to make them better and help through service” (interview). Schools needed to provide students the opportunity to learn to work in their local community and connect this work to democratic participation.

Participants also shifted the purpose of participation to include the need to achieve equality, tolerance, and social justice. For example, Kara added, “I want kids to look at social injustice and question is everyone really being treated fairly? If that’s not happening, then we obviously need to assess that as a society” (interview). Democracy cannot be achieved if social injustices exist, therefore students must be taught about the failings of democracy. Participants believed that everyone had a role in ending injustice. For instance, Marcus argued “If there is social injustice, it is the job of both parties to reach a reasonable conclusion to solve the injustices” (postquestionnaire). The political parties, which represent the people, should work to end social injustices. Participants further argued that the purpose of participation was to respect diversity and achieve equality. For example, Nancy wrote, “The most important part of democracy is about making people on the same level as others and respecting diversity. That’s what this country is made on [underlined by the participant]” (postquestionnaire). Thus, the purpose of participation was to ensure equality among diverse groups.

Ontogenetic Evolution

Lastly, participants were aware that their conceptions of democracy had changed over the course of the semester. For instance, Edgar noted,

You know they [the forum posts] do come in handy, and they are really effective because every week you are consistently discussing democracy. So, every week not only are you identifying what the quote means and how it relates to democracy and how it relates to yourself. You are coming up with a lesson to teach that, and you know, sometimes it was hard but I mean at the end of the day you learn a lot (interview).

Engaging in weekly reflections on democracy and applying those concepts to their future classroom led to shifts of their conceptions of democracy. For instance, Kara stated,

When I went to write my final paper about how I felt about democracy, I went through and looked at all my posts. What did I think about democracy in the first week, and then I could look at what I was saying in the last week. And kind of assess, like, where I went. Explore my thoughts [about democracy] based off of what my own responses. I liked that there was a record, and I could go through and look at that. Obviously if you’re journaling about it, doing it every week, it’s a constant practice, which is what democracy is, it’s a constant practice (interview).

The participants noted that the practice of reflection, of thinking about democracy in its perfect or imperfect forms, led to the development of more complex views about democracy. This led to the ontogenetic evolution of their conception of democracy and how they viewed democracy as a culturally meditated artifact.

Discussion

The findings revealed that initially the participants held traditional conceptions of democracy, similar to findings of previous research (see Boyle-Baise, 2003; Carr, 2006; Carr, 2008; Trent et al., 2010; Yeager & Van Hover, 2004). Initially, participants viewed democracy as having a set of knowledge needed to effectively vote and voting for the best candidate(s). They focused on voting as the most important form of democratic participation and that the purpose of participation was to preserve democracy nationally and secure individual rights and freedoms.

The findings reveal that discussing, journaling, and reflecting on democracy and citizenship led to an evolution in their conceptions of democracy. Wartofsky (1979) and Cole (1996) predicted that the use of tertiary artifacts could lead to qualitative transformation. Participants used and developed tertiary artifacts to examine various conceptions of democracy as a cultural-historical activity free from the constraints of the material world. This process allowed them to examine the current rules, norms, values, and beliefs of democracy and the

artifacts citizens use, which led to a qualitative transformation of their conception of democracy. Participants responded to the exploration of the praxis of democracy by adding new layers to their personal conception of democracy. This included adding new artifacts and objects (purposes of participation) of democracy to their existing conception.

Additionally, participants did shift their conceptions of democracy. Similar to the findings of Dinkelman (1999; Dinkelman, 2000), the act of reflection about democracy, citizenship, diversity, equality, and social justice led to shifts in participants' conceptions. Participants shifted from holding a traditional perspective toward a progressive and advanced conception of democracy. The results of this study demonstrate that allowing social studies PSTs to explore the concept of democracy in its perfect or imperfect forms can help them develop more complex conceptions of democracy.

Conclusion

Preservice social studies teachers' conceptions of democracy and citizenship may not be as monolithic or rigid as previous studies have implied. Given the fluidity of their conception, it is essential to evaluate their conceptions using multiple elicitation techniques. More importantly, preservice teachers need to engage in reflection of the practical aspects of their classroom practices and the underlying purposes of their role in the creation of future citizens in a vibrant and pluralistic democracy. These reflections should allow them to examine the praxis of democracy, its artifacts, and the purposes of participation.

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Appendix A

Photo elicitation activity photos

Photo	Traditional/Personally
1.	Berkeley Free Speech
2.	Boy and Girl Scout
3.	1963 Children's March
4.	Don't Tread on Me Flag
5.	Federalism Graphic
6.	Electoral College Map
7.	Habitat for Humanity
8.	Road Worker Helping
9.	Jury
10.	Majority Rule/Minority
11.	Civil Rights March
12.	Ku Klux Klan Rally
13.	Occupy Wall Street
14.	Muslim's Praying by
15.	Road Work
16.	The Bible and Flag
17.	Tax Forms
18.	President Obama's First
19.	Surveillance Cameras
20.	Union Strike
21.	Woman Voting
22.	Westboro Baptist
23.	Suffragette March
24.	Female and Male Soldier
25.	Teacher and Students