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Hello from the Other Side: Social Studies Faculty Teaching Biography within State History Courses

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Introduction

This paper explores the opinions and interests of pre-service social studies students at two universities enrolled in a state history course taught by a social studies education faculty member. A Midwestern private university (site one) and a Southern public university (site two) were the sites for data collection. Findings include similar motivation for learning state history and opinions on interactive history lessons, while showcasing different interests in historic figures. Heroification was a common theme from both sites as researchers were unable to combat hagiography. As the multi-site case study is longitudinal in nature, the courses in the study have been changed due to feedback and course assignments.

Objectives or purposes:

The purpose of this research study is to evaluate pre-service social studies teachers' opinions and interests in regards to biographical figures in their state history course. The study will answer two questions: (1) What are social studies education students' opinions about studying state history? (2) What state historical figures are social studies education students most interested in?

Perspectives/ Subjectivities

The theory that informs our research is intersectionality, which Caroline Eick explores in her article "Oral Histories of Education and the Relevance of Theory: Claiming New Spaces in a Post Revisionist Era" Eick (2011) notes that intersectionality (which was thoroughly examined by the theorist Patricia Hill Collins in her work *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and Politics of Empowerment*) offers researchers a means to acknowledge that

their identity falls into many categories, which may help or hinder their research. The theory of intersectionality is an important consideration for historical researchers. In our research, our identities and intersectionalities have created a means for us to gather information and data. Our roles as a white females, mothers, daughters, students, teachers, and professors have all lent to the collection of materials for our educational study and the analyses that we have created. Which leads to the question of how successful might researchers with different intersectionalities in be in recreating the same study? Would they have been able to produce the same analysis?

As PhD students, both authors explored ideas of biography and bias within our own research. These personal histories and experiences followed us in our positions as first year tenure track professors. After graduating, we were in strangely symmetrical situations. Both first year professors, with an extensive background in social studies pedagogy and biographical research, teaching a mixture of pre-service and history majors in state history courses at our new institutional homes. We immediately began planning our courses together. We shared ideas on daily activities, out of classroom experiences, and major assignments.

Lauren's new position was at a university in a rural area of Georgia, very different from the urban environment that she had been working in for over a decade. As a lifelong resident of Georgia, and a former middle school Georgia History teacher, Lauren felt prepared for her new position. Lauren's doctoral research had been based in Georgia, and her biggest hurdle was to quickly gather age-appropriate primary and secondary readings for her 3000 level Georgia history course. Aubrey landed a position out of state. As a new resident to Midwest, Aubrey found herself teaching Illinois history for the first time to many state residents. Unlike Georgia history, Illinois history is not taught in a standalone class at the secondary level. Illinois history is impeded into United States history. As an outsider, Aubrey was cautious to how she approached

Illinois corruption. As a former Georgian, she had encountered opposition to teaching past faults of the state, for example the Trail of Tears, Civil War causes, and Jim Crow. As it was Aubrey's first exposure to the teaching of Illinois history, classroom limitations were likely.

Morris, Leung, Ames, and Lickel in their 1999 article "Views from The Inside and Outside: Integrating Emic and Etic Insights about Culture and Justice Judgment," contend that studies which incorporate both emic and etic perspectives in their research methodologies are actually stronger than those which rely on one methodology alone. The "synergy" of the two methods "stimulates the progress" of each methodology, and counter-balances the weakness of only using either emic or etic methodologies (781-796). Our study benefits from the acknowledgement that these positions can color our research. Lauren's status as a resident of Georgia permits her access to concepts and hegemonic ideals that an outsider might find difficult to navigate. Aubrey's status as an outsider allows her to question and critique Illinois history in ways that which a native might not be able to realize. Our emic/ etic perspectives construct a theoretical lens by which we can stimulate a more detailed and genuine inquiry of the motivations and limitations of our preservice social studies teachers.

Methods, techniques, or modes of inquiry:

In this research study, we employ a multiple case study qualitative research method. The research questions are best suited to be answered by employing a qualitative method. Data collection included observations, participant surveys, field notes, and participant course work. Data was collected by two faculty members in different states. A Midwestern private university (site one) and a Southern public university (site two) were the sites for data collection. Both of the institutions are located one hour from each of the state's major cities. The faculty members involved in the study hold appointments in secondary education. The faculty members also teach

the state history course housed in the school's history department. The state history courses have pre-service social studies teachers, history majors, and other degree concentrations amongst the students. While each course is composed of a variety of degree programs, the case study is limited to those students who will become social studies teachers. Site one includes five participants and site two includes twelve participants. Students were surveyed at the beginning of semester concerning their expectations for the course, and were surveyed again at the conclusion of the semester to determine how their expectations and interests evolved throughout the course.

Case study research is conducted because the researcher wants to understand the real-life case and assume that such an understanding is likely to involve contextual conditions important to their case (Yin, 2013; Merriam, 2009). The focus on contemporary research instead of historical events is best suited for case study research (Yin, 2008; Yin, 2013). Furthermore, the use of multiple cases of social studies education faculty and tutors teaching state history allowed us to compare their experiences under different constraints. Additionally, the use of multiple case study design allowed for cross-case analysis and a synthesis of the shared experiences faculty (Yin 2011; Yin, 2013). The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of teaching state history to social studies teacher candidates. The results of this study display the experiences and opinions of the participants about participating in a state history course.

Biography process

The study and writing of history may be approached in a number of ways. Biography offers students of history the opportunity to investigate the relationship between “the complex layers of society, culture, and politics through the lives of others” (Kridel, 1998, p. 17). As biography has the capability to brush up on disparate and “rival ways of understanding,” it may

explain the lives of “human beings and the nature of identity” through psychoanalysis, philosophy, fiction, poetry, sociology, ethnography, history” (Lee, 2009, p.15) Specialists in many of these fields are often skeptical of the scholarship of biography---but biography offers us a way to explore the interconnectivity of human lives with the social structures, customs, and events occurring in the world around them. Shucking “the noble dream” (Novick, 1998, p.17) of objectivity in history, and embracing the personal relationship biography offers, enables readers and writers to empathize and criticize subjects in ways that could be lost in *great events* based history courses (Anderson-Smith, 1998). Additionally, biography allows historians to embrace a feminist perspective of history. Traditional histories value actions that have not been associated with women historically “as so few women have had the type of success that would attract notice” (Wagner-Martin, 1998, p. 7). Biographies of women have the ability to blend “external and interior events” (Wagner-Martin, 1998, p. 11) allowing us to acknowledge that the “personal is political (Hanish, 1970, p. 76)” and enable students of history to embed empathy and cultural responsiveness into their teaching.

The researchers assert biography is an essential study for secondary education students. Biographies capture our attention on a personal level and entice us to “becoming more than we currently are” (Gay, 2010, p. 3). The use of biography in the secondary education classroom allows for students to instruct in a culturally relevant manner. Culturally relevant courses focused on historical inquiry allow preservice teachers to learn skills necessary to instruct students in a manner that questions the dominant curriculum and promotes an inclusive democratic society simultaneously (Salinas & Blevins, 2014). Preservice teachers must engage in historical inquiry in order to develop cultural responsiveness (Bolick, Torrez, & Manfra, 2014). Preservice teachers must be taught in a way that models culturally relevant pedagogy. Since a majority of

teachers hail from the dominant group culturally relevant teaching practices will help prepare them to work with diverse student populations (Sevier, 2005). Culturally relevant teaching practices help to shift the classroom focus from raising test scores to empowering students through the curriculum (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2012).

Biography was an integral part of course design for both researchers. Students were informed that they would engage in primary biographical research at the beginning of the course. Each student was asked to choose a biographical subject who had a great impact on their state's history. Opportunities were given for students to practice and improve their historical scholarship as the course progressed, where they shared an annotated bibliography at the course midterm, and were offered suggestions on where to find additional sources for their research. As the culminating project for our courses, these checkpoints were necessary to ensure that students were given enough support to create quality biographies. In order to showcase their biographical subject for their fellow classmates, students participated in biographical "speed-dating" in order to "meet" the other biographical subjects. They rated each other on how well their subjects would get along, and then decided who their ideal "match" might be based on their subjects' beliefs, experiences, and accomplishments. No romantic considerations determined the "match." Although anachronistic, activities such as this allowed students to not only report back on the experiences of their subjects, but to manipulate the content in order to gain deeper meaning as to the influence and impact that their subject had on their state's history and fellow citizens.

Data sources, evidence, objects, or materials:

The participants in this study are pre-service secondary social studies students. Data was collected in multiple forms. Two surveys were used for data collection. Participants completed a survey on the first and last day of their state history course. Additionally, student work was used

to gather data. Students chose biographical subjects who had a great impact on the state (Georgia for Lauren's students, Illinois for Aubrey's students). In order to increase class learning, each historical figure was only allowed to be chosen by one student. When analyzing student biographies, we utilize the term "student biographer" and who they researched to identify study participants and their writings. As we are working with a large number of student researchers and participants, no pseudonyms are used within the analysis to avoid confusion.

Results and/or substantiated conclusions or warrants for arguments/point of view:

As the multi-site case study is longitudinal in nature, we are able to discuss the preliminary results of the study at this time. Based on survey data, the two sites offer much insight into what initially compels students to take state history courses, how they feel about out of classroom experiences will impact their state history coursework, and whom they are most interested in studying. At site one, in a small private college in Illinois, students noted that their interest came primarily from the fact that they are residents, and felt that it was necessary to learn more about their state as they were "citizens." Similarly, at the second site of the study, a medium-sized public university in Georgia, students also felt compelled to know the history of the state that they lived in, but additionally noted that it would be important for their future careers as social studies educators. Several students also noted that it was important to study the past in order to understand current events, as well as to not repeat historical mistakes.

As both courses include several opportunities for community engagement, historical service learning, and opportunities to be involved in local historical events, each student was asked what they perceived to be the impact of outside experiences on their learning. Students at both sites were eager to experience history first hand. Students at site one noted how they believed that these opportunities would enhance their ability to learn, and believed it would

allow them to make deeper connections to course content. Students at site two repeatedly stated that “hands on” learning was the best way to learn and that it would help them to have more “appreciation” for their state’s history. While the students at site one and site two were in agreement of the importance of out of class experiences, their biography selections were not contingent on the local history explored.

We asked students to state what they were more excited to learn about their state’s history. Based on the data, we have found that the topics of most interest to the students differ at site one versus site two. At site one, numerous students noted they wanted to study the deep corruption history of the state. Additionally, several students noted that they wanted to know specifically about the history of a major city located within the state. Students at site two made no mention of possible corruption in the state government, nor did they have any interest in the development of their state’s major city. The three topics that were of most interest to the students were the state’s founding, the Civil War, and Indigenous Peoples who were once the dominant population.

Furthermore, students at both sites were both asked to write a biography over a person they believed positively or negatively impacted the state of study. Students at site one selected individuals who created progressive change excluding one mobster. All individuals studied were prominent after the Civil War except for an Indigenous chief. Students at site two had a much more diverse selection of historical figures including presidents, prominent Civil War individuals, Civil Rights activists, moonshiners, as well as individuals with reactionary views towards race.

These analyses indicate there are similar motivations for pre-service social studies teachers taking state history courses. They share common reasoning and seek opportunities for

interactive history lessons. The findings also indicate the historical figures of interest to the students differ in site one versus site two. The student biographies from both sites also indicated very high amount of herofication of their biographical subjects, which surprised the researchers as they had conducted numerous activities to combat this biographical tendency. Researchers had discussed the need to study and teach historical figures holistically. Researchers also showed students examples of their own work with biography. Due to these results, the researchers decided to restructure the class for the next time they teach the course and determine if their new pedagogical approach was more effective in battling herofication in biography. Students in both states are required to study state history for teacher licensure. The first portion of this longitudinal study was concluded in May 2017 with continued data, we will be able to provide additional findings of pre-service social studies teachers in state history courses.

Additionally, analysis has revealed unexpected reflections and findings. As former secondary history teachers, the instruction of college level history has been a different experience. As former public school history teachers, we have learned the teaching of biography closely followed our secondary classrooms. In our experience, this was the first introduction of biographical research for many of the students. Furthermore, as a social studies methods faculty teaching content coursework to pre-service social studies students, we feel the course could be viewed as a showcase of research into practice. The internal pressure for high-quality, engaging instruction creates a space for reflective teaching practices, so after the initial results of the study, we have redesigned the course in hopes of creating rich classroom environment full of historical thinking.

Analysis of Student Biographies

The trend at both university sites was the heroification of biography. Students appeared to gloss over controversial sections of the subject's life, or skip completely. Additionally, themes of progress, leadership, and meritocracy were present throughout students' biographies. While students were quick to offer positive analysis within their biographies, they were not very generous with any sort of critique (with the exception of one Georgia History student). When writing on the subject of controversy, students would simply present the reader with detail after detail of the subject's life, without any inquiry as to motivations and impact of their subject's actions.

Political Leaders

The majority of the students examined historical figures that fit within what James Loewen describes as the heroic archetype (Loewen, 2007). Students overwhelmingly wrote about people who, based upon their writing, were impactful to their state due to their progressive actions and ideologies, and leadership skills. Political leaders such as James Oglethorpe, Ivan Allen Jr., Ellis Arnall, and Adlai Stevenson III were all subjects chosen by the students. In each biography, students acknowledged some of the negative actions taken by the leaders, but would conclude with various expressions as to their unwavering progressivism and leadership. When examining James Oglethorpe, a student biographer wrote that he "left behind a legacy of selflessness, prosperity, and generosity," when numerous examples had been provided in class as to his profiting from the slave trade. Similar claims of "legacy" were applied to Adlai Stevenson III as his student biographer proclaimed that he "was destined for politics generations before he was born" and "continued his family's legacy in a very respectable manner through his many

accomplishments.” Additionally, student acceptance of the subject’s actions as the progress needed for the state was staggering and almost episodic. Ellis Arnall and Ivan Allen Jr.’s student biographers referred to the two politicians in strikingly similar ways. Arnall’s biographer noted that “he may not have been well liked by everyone, but I do not believe that anyone can argue that he did not help to get this state where we are today,” while Arnall’s biographer stated that “although his time in office may have been spotted with some controversy, he will be remembered as a man who helped Georgia progress to the state it is today.”

Activists

These prescribed assumptions of progress and acceptance continued into the students’ analysis of activists who greatly impacted the states of Illinois and Georgia. People such as Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, Rebecca Latimer Felton, and Jackie Robinson were celebrated for their innovation, steadfastness, and courage. Student biographers remarked on Washington’s “tireless and selfless efforts” for “civil rights” and how Dubois “will be remembered by history as one of the greatest crusaders for African American rights in the world.” Yet neither biographer fully explained the intense rivalry and opposing ideologies that were held between Washington and DuBois, this lack of analysis affirms Loewen’s argument that the use of heroification of historic figures leads students to continually place individuals on pedestals (Loewen, 2007). Rebecca Latimer Felton’s student biographer exemplifies this tendency by explaining both the positive (campaigning for female suffrage) and negative (working for the continued disenfranchisement of African Americans) in the body of her text, but then still seeks to elevate her subject by stating that she was a “strong,” “excellent,” woman “who held true to what she believed in” despite its “offensive nature.”

Jackie Robinson's student biographer, became so enamored by their subject that the biography lost all value. Noting that "Jackie Robinson had a crucial impact on athletics worldwide, not only did he break the color line but he influenced many generations and set the tone for future players. His courageous and bold demeanor inspired players to pursue their careers with passion and to be grateful for any opportunities thrown their way." Continually remarking on his "courage" and "bravery," his student biographer affirms that he created "a life worth remembering," through his actions "incredible athletes" would "no longer... be overlooked or taunted" and he "set the stage for integration and equality worldwide." This list of almost mythical qualities conforms to Loewen's analysis "that herofication has stolen from us the important facets of his life, leaving only melodramatic minutiae" (Loewen, 2007, p. 30). The trials and human aspects of Robinson's life are replaced with superhuman courage and influence to the point where his real story of struggle, survival, and success are lost to platitudes of heroism and fearlessness.

Indigenous Peoples

Interestingly, one of the most popular groups of leaders that student biographers researched were Indigenous Peoples. Tomochichi, Sequoyah, Mary Musgrove, Major Ridge, and Black Hawk were all admired for their "progressive" attitudes and leadership within their tribal nations. Tomochichi, as chief of the Yamacraw, was "a friend and ally" to the English, through his "relationship with Oglethorpe" he "was able to promote the good nature of the British" which would allow Savannah to "thrive." All of the accomplishments listed by the student biographer of Tomochichi are positioned in how they supported the British, not the Yamacraw. How did this relationship help the Yamacraw and Creek? What did the growth of Savannah mean for the Creek who lived in the area. This critique can be applied to student

biographer's assessment of Musgrove, Sequoyah, and Ridge as well. Musgrove's role as a "mediator" would ensure that "Georgia's economy to flourish," Sequoyah "tremendous contribution" of the Cherokee alphabet "allowed for opportunities that were not available before" to collaborate "with missionaries," "politicians," and "white folks," and Ridge's "impact by becoming a prominent leader" helped to led his people down the trail of tears.

Martyrs

While the Georgia student biographers identified collaboration with the British and United States by Indigenous Peoples as proof of leadership, one Illinois student biographer identified Black Hawk's refusal to cooperate with the United States as his qualification of hero status. The student biographer noted that "now, he must... be remembered as ... the warrior who fought to defend his people's way of life against the massive United States," and though he ended up "defeated shell of a man," he was a great strategist whose bravery and strength earned his respect of his tribe." Black Hawk's fight against the United States is how his student biographer positions his story as one of martyrdom for a "lost cause." Similarly in Georgia, a student biographer does the same to explain the significance of Confederate General James Longstreet actions in Georgia after the Civil War. Labeled as a "scalawag" for his collaboration with the North after the war, student biographer argued that "all of these bad things that were happening to the south after the war caused Georgians to look for someone to blame," and that someone was Longstreet. According to the student biographer, he would spend "his long life suffering after the war," with no mention of the suffering countless lives that suffered under slavery.

Counterculture Icons

Student biographers admired the leadership of counterculture icons as well as politicians and activists. Two criminals, Al Capone and Raymond Parks, were the subjects of two student biographies. While the heroification of murderers is nothing new for textbooks (Loewen, 1995), student researchers in both Illinois and Georgia found several admiral qualities in the lives of Capone and Parks. Al Capone is described as a man of “celebrity status.” He “took from the government and gave to the poor,” this “Robin Hood” description of Capone was “justified” by the student biographer “due to him providing for the demands of the people.” Similar claims were made a student biographer in Georgia who researched the life of Raymond Parks, moonshine distiller and one of the founding members of NASCAR. The student biographer noted how he “would financially help the state through donations and contributions from his booming moonshining enterprise” and how he “contributed to Atlanta during and after the Great Depression, while helping produce a sport that continues to bring money into the state of Georgia to this day.” The student biographer proclaims that even “though he did not get the recognition he deserved” he “was a good man” and gave “back the necessary amount to the state to help it grow.”

Though the majority of both sets of students wrote overwhelmingly positive accounts of their subjects, one student in Georgia did not follow the trend. Writing on a reactionary historical figure, Mildred Lewis Rutherford, the student did not display any heroification within her biography. Instead the student narrated a list of events and ideologies that guided Rutherford’s life, but offered little to no analysis of the subject. This is a compelling element to our study. Rutherford wrote numerous texts during her lifetime that supported the enslavement of African Americans, vilified the North, and celebrated the Confederacy--it would be difficult work to transform her into a hero--and while the student did not attempt to whitewash

Rutherford's life, she also did not offer substantial critical analysis, choosing instead to remove analysis from her biography altogether.

Changes to Courses

At the conclusion of our courses, we both decided that significant changes would be needed to both the structure and the desired student outcomes. We did not overcome the issue of hagiography within our courses. Despite numerous examples and reminders from instructors, students examined their biographical subjects through the lens of accomplishment (with only one exception). As former secondary history teachers, researchers believe students need to be able to examine and critique state historical figures. A new desired outcome for this course would be to combat the heroification of historical figures when engaging in biographical research. In order to do this, a theme centered in controversy would be applied to both courses as well as new structural designs for the course. When students use their (local) research to try and right wrongs, either individually or collectively, they learn that doing so is fun" (Loewen, 2018, p. 106). As Lauren and Aubrey teach in different regions, both adapted two different controversial issues pertinent to their universities' locations. As Lauren's university is located in the South, she chose to utilize the theme of Confederate monuments to guide her course. Aubrey teaches in a state that has many documented instances of political corruption (Biles, 2005; Gradel & Simpson, 2015), she chose to use the theme of corruption to guide her the newly combined social studies methods and Illinois history course. Students wanted to know more about the political structures of Illinois and how government officials had transitioned "from the statehouse to big house" (Kelly, 2014). Research conducted by Diana Hess (2009), Nel Noddings (2017), and Laurie Brooks (2017) contend that by involving students in the investigation and resolution of controversial issues teachers can promote a better understanding of history, current events, and

democracy. Through the application of these controversial themes, the researchers seek to create opportunities for students to analyze historical figures (the subjects of the Confederate monuments in Georgia, and the number of “corrupt” politicians in Illinois) in new ways. Where students do not feel as though they must always elevate and celebrate their biographical subjects, but also to critique and assess.

Lauren struggled throughout the semester to make the course palatable to both future teachers and history majors. This meant that the course required extensive readings, numerous projects and out of class experiences, and most importantly--very few lectures. Without the use of traditional tests and quizzes, Lauren struggled at the beginning of her course to have students complete the readings before class in order for them to actively participate in class discussions. Education students noted in course evaluations, that they had never been asked to read this much for a course (this was for many the first upper level history course that they had taken) and they were not used to the applied nature of the class meetings, as they had only had lecture-based history courses in the past. As students had positively responded to the interactive nature of the class activities and experiences, Lauren decided to restructure the course in a manner that cultivated these learning experiences rather than using them as an additive to the traditional college level history course.

Restructuring the course meant that the readings would be streamlined; numerous primary sources would be required, but many secondary sources would become suggested readings. Ensuring the quality of the course over the quantity of the material was a new focal point in the course structure. Determined to create richer learning environments for students where they would apply the course content to modern day concerns and issues a multimedia learning objective was created using the learning management system. After students completed

the required reading for the course, they would be asked to find a multimedia component (an article, a picture, a gif, a meme, a video, etc.) that they needed to connect to the week's readings. They would be required to post this artifact before class began each Monday. To model secondary education instructional practices, students would be asked to award "appreciation badges" to one of their fellow students for either courage, thinking differently, or making a good point. Additionally, every class would be a showcase of preferred social studies teaching methods. Lectures would be practically eliminated, no tests or reading quizzes would be required, and student grades would be based on their outside class experiences (service learning, book clubs, multimedia artifacts and discussions) and our shared research project.

Aubrey, along with the chair of the history department, decided to embed Illinois history into an existing social studies methods course. The Illinois history course was only required for the social studies education students at the university. The professors thought by only teaching the course to secondary education students, they could emphasize the teaching of Illinois history. By incorporating Illinois history into a social studies methods course, Aubrey could focus on the inclusion of Illinois history into United States history. Since Illinois history is not taught at the secondary level in Illinois, it is important for teachers to include throughout the teaching of United States history. The new course includes topics such as "the teaching of biography", "the planning of local field trips", and "culturally relevant history." The course also will focus on individuals involved in corruption.

Both researchers incorporated Loewen's *Lies My Teacher Told Me* into future coursework. Aubrey previously used the text while teaching social studies methods courses during her graduate school tenure. Student feedback and course evaluations indicated the book was useful. She included the text in the subsequent semester as she had the opportunity to teach

the same group of students. For future course instruction, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, has been integrated into Aubrey's combination social studies methods and Illinois history course. Lauren has included *Lies My Teacher Told Me* on the booklist for the next run of her Georgia history course. The researchers believe that "students need to do accurate history, coupled with historiography, to sort out in which ways their role models are worth following" (Loewen, 2018, p. 13). The researchers hope embedding *Lies My Teacher Told Me* into their courses will help with heroification of historical figures.

Scientific or scholarly significance of the study or work:

The literature reviewed showed a gap in research specific to social studies education faculty teaching history courses. The research showed weakness in the teaching of state history. Furthermore, the literature was lacking in the impacts of community history, historic preservation, and field experiences on pre-service social studies teachers. The literature displayed a positive correlation between primary and secondary students' outside experiences in developing historical knowledge (Barton, 2008; Sunal, 1991). The research provided a correlation between school age student attitudes toward history and methods of instruction (Downey & Levstik, 1991). The literature review provided positive views on using local controversial current events with social studies teachers (Swalwell & Schweber, 2016). Additionally, the literature showed a connection to pre-service teachers' critical inquiry and service learning (Wade, 1997). The findings in the literature demonstrate a need for further research to be conducted surrounding history instruction in social studies education programs. Additionally, the lack of research on the history instruction in social studies education needs to be studied. The research project is a direct response to the call made by many social studies researchers and practitioners (Adler, 2008). Furthermore, as tenure track positions shrink (National Center for Education

Statistics, 2017), more social studies education faculty members might find themselves teaching history courses. This phenomenon would make gaps in the literature more pertinent.

Conclusion

The purpose of this longitudinal research study is to evaluate pre-service social studies teachers' opinions and interests in regards to biographical figures in their state history course. Researchers answered two questions: (1) What are social studies education students' opinions about studying state history? (2) What state historical figures are social studies education students most interested in? Students noted that their interest came primarily from the fact that they are residents, and felt that it was necessary to learn more about their state as they were "citizens." Students additionally noted that the course information would be important for their future careers as social studies educators. Several students also noted that it was important to study the past in order to understand current events, as well as to not repeat historical mistakes. The overwhelming theme at both university sites was the heroification of biography as researchers were not able to overcome the issue of hagiography within their courses. In order to analyze biographies, researchers divided the student biographies into five groups: political leaders, activists, Indigenous Peoples, martyrs, and counterculture icons. At the conclusion of the courses, researchers decided that significant changes would be needed to both the structure and the desired student outcomes based on feedback and assignments. Both researchers plan to incorporate a theme centered in controversy applied to their courses as well as new structural designs for the course.

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