

The Messages We Miss: Banned Books, Censored Texts, and Citizenship

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to describe preservice teachers' views on the use of banned or censored texts and taboo topics in the classroom. The study sought to discern how elementary and secondary teacher candidates enrolled in methods courses at a Midwestern university thought about issues of censorship, citizenship, and curricular materials they may or may not decide to use. The study found that, when introduced to banned and censored texts related to citizenship, teacher candidates conceptually appreciated the notion of exploring controversial citizenship issues with students

Key words: *Banned Books, Citizenship, Censorship, Controversy*

Introduction

An education climate of reductionist curriculum in the U.S., fueled by a rigid conception of the Common Core State Standards presents a formidable challenge for the preparations of teachers. Teacher preparation represents opportunities to induct and orient teacher candidates into their professional practice. The current environment emphasizes practices for literacy development through exposure to various texts and cultivation of reading and communication skills. In addition, higher education represents a setting for the cultivation of social and intellectual engagement and creativity. It challenges students to question the social norms, especially when those norms may involve matters of unjust conditions.

Thus, limitations of K-12 curricula may pose opportunities for teacher educators to (1) acknowledge, value, and apply principles of a critical democratic society in their practice, (2) demonstrate the knowledge and awareness to locate relevant resources for utilization in their classroom, and (3) experience the confidence and efficacy to implement such learning in their teaching. We conjecture that in order to accomplish such processes, teacher educators can create

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an environment in pedagogy courses that facilitate at least three conditions: (1) teacher candidates' development of deep content knowledge, especially with regard to complex notions of citizenship and its democratic applications, (2) an openness to texts and messages that may seem contrary to those that are purveyed as common sense, (3) a practice-based application of critical pedagogy that is oriented toward disrupting the status quo and supporting transformative democracy.

This paper describes the results of a project in which teacher candidates at a large Midwestern public university reflected upon democracy and citizenship in relationship to their practice. The candidates selected, located, and researched banned and censored texts, and used them as centerpieces in the creation of developmentally appropriate lessons. They reflected interactively with peers across sections of pedagogy courses and compared their views at the end of the experience with those at the beginning. We sequence this paper by providing a brief review of the literature that informed this study followed by a description of the design and analysis of the project. The findings section presents the patterns of texts selected by study participants and describes four cases to illustrate outcomes of the learning experience.

Citizenship, Controversy, and Censorship in Education

The preparation of critically thinking democratic citizens necessitates exposure to and discussion of topics about which disagreements exist. While disagreement represents a common social experience, controversy occurs when such disagreements involve topics or situations that prompt emotionally charged responses or challenge conventional thinking about a topic. To prevent, discourage, or limit such patterns of discourse, authority figures may limit content or patterns of communication.

Given the professional reality that teaching represents a social and political act, teachers and educators represent models and authority figures for their students, and thus possess serious obligations to consider the influences of their social positions on the extent to which their students approach to teaching about citizenship as a state of responsibility, leadership, or social change. By avoiding difficult conversations or assuming neutral stances, educators model for students the acceptability of avoiding exploration of social topics, the discussion of which may realize positive social outcomes. Prince's (2008) claim that "neutrality as a pedagogical strategy is not wrong; it simply is not a universal principle" (p. 118-119) informs about the acceptability of a variety of teaching postures with regard to social topics that involve differences of opinion.

Citizenship Education

One of the core missions of schools relates to the preservation of cultural values, which include the development of citizens for participation in democracy (Parker, 2015). Optimally, this environment would include (1) responsible citizens who adhere to and apply the social structures and rules, (2) participatory citizens who take initiative to structure processes within the system, and (3) justice-oriented citizens who continually reexamine the system for structural weaknesses and act on behalf of those marginalized by the system (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Yet teacher education environments tend to prompt students' development of personally responsible and participatory citizenship ideals, limiting opportunities to examine the structural inadequacies that prompt social injustices, and, therefore, do not often develop these dispositions in teachers for application in practice (Carr, 2008; Lucey, 2012; Westheimer, 2015)

Oftentimes, education for citizenship predicates itself upon stock stories of universality in which all citizens experience the same conditions and opportunities for social participation (Bell, 2010; Tupper, 2008). Tupper (2008) clarifies these stories as telling, "we live in a democracy; that universal citizenship exists; that as citizens of a democracy, we enjoy the same rights and freedoms; and significantly, that we are equal." (p. 73). Huse (2008) argues that this social disillusionment relates, in part, to student egocentrism, ignorance, and apathy toward social and global events, along with failure of educators to encourage student social participation and engagement.

The application of a universal approach to citizenship education disenfranchises those members of society who may not experience success in a manner defined by the dominant culture. Universal approaches to citizenship education may reinforce feelings of learned helplessness among societal members who do not possess the citizenship qualities prescribed. Tupper, Cappello, and Sevigny (2010) observe the disparities in availability to textual resources among students in different economic contexts, despite the sameness of citizenship curricula. Education settings may perceive discussion of the counter-narratives as controversial because they disrupt narrow or universal conceptions of citizenship explain existent social structures.

Scholars who study citizenship for democracy differentiate "thick" or transformative conceptions of democracy from "thin" notions that maintain existing structures and systems (Lund & Carr, 2008). Proponents of thick conceptions note the importance of developing awareness in teachers of the transformative power of justice-oriented citizenship. Yet studies (e.g., Carr, 2008;

Lucey, 2012) indicate that pre-service teachers may lack the deep citizenship notions necessary for affecting learning processes that can be transformative to their teaching practice.

Culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000) represents a facet of citizenship education that illustrates these thick and thin notions. Banks's (2006) four approaches to culturally responsive teaching (contributions, additive, transformation, and social action) can be interpreted alongside Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) three types of citizens within the framework of thick and thin notions of citizenship. Table 1 below represents a comparison between Banks's and Westheimer and Kahne's ideas about citizen types and multicultural teaching practices. This analysis indicates that Banks's understandings of "contributions" and "additive" approaches represent "thin" notions of citizenship, similar to Westheimer and Kahne's description of "responsible" and "participatory" citizens. These thin types of citizenship foster citizens who maintain the social status quo.

In the contributions approach to culturally responsive teaching (Banks, 2006), educators insert into their lessons selective accounts of persons from underrepresented groups who fit within the dominant social narrative. We view this approach as consistent with Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) personally responsible citizen, who pursues the opportunities to participate in citizenship opportunities provided by the social leaders. The contributions approach represents a subtle portrayal of the personally responsible citizen in that education processes uphold individuals from underrepresented groups who act responsibly within the framework of cultural values practices with a society. For example, the oft-employed example from civil rights movement concerns teaching emphasis on Martin Luther King, and neglect of Malcolm X.

The additive approach provides more of a culturally responsive element than the contributions approach and aligns with the participatory citizen. In the additive approach, teaching continues to retain the dominant social narrative, yet allows for supplemental exposure to underrepresented cultures and their contexts or histories. For example, coverage of the civil rights era may include a unit that examines the patterns of segregation and lifestyles in the south from the 1920s to offer background on the movement. This approach aligns with the participatory citizenship in that it provides a framework for discussion about underrepresented cultures without disturbing the existing social narrative. Rather, it provides a background or context to support the example citizens upheld through the contributions approach. The participatory citizen represents a citizenship leader within the existing social system. The additive approach represents a form of

leadership for discussing culturally responsive topics without challenging the dominant social narrative.

“Justice-oriented” (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) citizens act in “transformational” ways that involve “social action” (Banks, 2006). Classrooms structured accordingly, support the development of young citizens who recognize thick notions of democracy and have access to the necessary tools to pursue social change. In the transformational and social action approaches, classrooms engage in inquiry to examine multiple perspectives of social content, discuss social problems, and work to bring about social change in view of alternative ideas developed. These approaches challenge the dominant social narrative in that they may question or interrogate the assumptions for social decisions and structures. Pursued separately or in tandem, the approaches align with justice-oriented citizenship by examining and changing the social narrative and recasting structures that frame society.

Table 1

Comparing Notions of Citizenship and Democracy, Citizen Types, and Multicultural Education

Notions of Citizenship for Democracy	Westheimer & Kahne (2004)	Banks (2006)
Thin	Personally Responsible	Contributions
Thin	Participatory	Additive
Thick	Justice-Oriented	Transformation & Social Action

Preparing culturally responsive teachers represents an essential element of cultivating educators who foster thick conceptions of citizenship among their learners. Castro’s (2010) analysis of research that concerns culturally responsive teaching found that teacher candidates express receptivity to a general balance of learning conditions for all learners; however, they remain resistant to teaching practices that validate the unjust cultural realities affected by dominant culture that they inherit and perpetuate. For example, candidates may be quick to affirm the appropriateness of subject content instructional strategies that allow all students equal opportunity to explore content materials; however, they resist providing students with content affirming a historical perspective different from their own and which portrays them in an unflattering manner.

Much as an individual caught in some form of misconduct may balk at accepting ownership for his or her actions when presented with content or social narratives that present

alternative views of oppressive, teachers and teacher candidates resist such accounts, claiming ignorance or providing other less controversial explanations that fit the dominant narrative. In other words, teachers and teacher candidates tend to evade responsibility for the patterns of social dominance exercised by their culture. Garrett and Segall (2013) consider teacher candidates' claims of ignorance and their resistance to culturally responsive learning strategies as efforts to avoid and redirect uncomfortable or controversial conversation. Topics related to social marginalization of underrepresented groups may be controversial to white, female, middle class teacher candidates when they are inconsistent with the social understandings that have shaped the candidates' sense of identity.

Teaching Controversial Issues

When teaching about controversial issues with their candidates, teacher educators may anticipate that their students may resist discussions about these issues because of inconsistent viewpoints with life experiences or perspectives. Hess (2008) observes that teachers' most frequent rationale for including discussions of controversial issues in classroom activities relates to understandings of a democratic society and the reason for education. However, teachers tend to reflect their own vision of democracy and purposes of schooling when raising such issues with their students and do not agree as to what represents a controversial issue (Hess, 2008). Alternatively, when students have an opportunity to explore their own ideas alongside others' perspectives on democracy and citizenship; they may encounter "live, public, and contested issues where significant disagreement exists." (Misco & Patterson, 2007, p. 525). When their "ideas, opinions, information, theories, or conclusions are incompatible" (Johnson & Johnson, 2008, p. 217) with their peers or with ideas presented by other resources, they may avoid perpetuating a citizenry who are "easily exploited by political machinery and demagoguery" (Misco & Patterson, 2007, p. 528).

While educators may disagree about what constitutes a controversial issue, theorists have attempted to use the nature or reason for the controversy as a basis for understanding why people view these issues as contentious. Theorists classify controversial issues as having epistemic (when opposing views lack rational basis) and behavioral (significantly tested within a given society) criteria (c.f.: Hand, 2008; Warnick & Smith, 2014). Understanding why people may view an issue as controversial may provide a basis for resolving related differences of opinion. While literature

has not explicitly determined the basis for controversy among teachers, research on teachers and pre-service teachers' interpretations of these topics may provide some indicator of their nature.

Studies indicate that the definition of controversial topics relates to the nature of the group researched. For example, Oulton, Day, Dillon, and Grace (2004) found that teachers who were participants in three focus groups most frequently identified issues related to sex education and drug issues as being controversial. Misco and Patterson's (2007) survey of preservice teachers at two institutions found respondents comfortable addressing controversial issues that related to political conflict and racial conflict. The respondents expressed least comfort talking about sexual orientation, sexual harassment, and religious conflict. Rambosk's (2011) analysis of survey responses from 203 Florida pre-service teachers found that respondents ranked as most controversial (in descending sequence of frequency), gay/lesbian rights, abortion, drug legalization pornography, and creationism. In terms of those issues that should not be presented in social studies methods courses, respondents identified mostly the same topics; however, they ranked them in a different sequence: abortion, gay/lesbian rights, creationism, pornography, genocide/ethnic cleansing.

Teachers may possess different attitudes towards controversial issues as guided by their experiences or familiarities with the topics. Kelly (1986) identified four teacher positions towards controversial issues: (1) exclusive neutrality (teacher does not introduce topics considered to be controversial by the larger community and pursues a neutral classroom), (2) exclusive partiality (claims existence of a correct position on controversial issues and limits positions to argument), (3) neutral impartiality (classroom discussions without teacher point of view), and (4) committed impartiality (involved with process and express beliefs). Hess (2008) observed that teachers may include controversial topics in their courses when topics of controversy align with their own views.

While Hess (2008) noted that teachers disagree as to what they interpret as controversial and fear administrator consequences for classroom coverage, they agree about their importance to social studies teaching. Byford, Lennon, and Russell (2009) confirmed that "teachers understood the importance of controversial issues in the social studies but were worried about limitations, their teaching effectiveness, student behavior, and consequences from the community and district" (p. 169). Teaching about controversial issues represents an important aspect of teaching and learning; however, teachers lack of universal agreement as to what controversial issues are acceptable and fear harmful professional consequences for addressing unpopular topics.

The preparation of teachers for a democratic citizenry necessitates processes that both affirm the democratic successes with existing social environments and encouraging dialogue and action regarding conditions that provide for inequitable living conditions. The development and revision of these processes requires interpretations of how students respond to these conditions through the lenses of who they are.

Censorship in Education

Controversy represents a power struggle that threatens what can pass as the norm for discourse. For example, a high school education curriculum shift to require a course about African American history represents a controversy because it informs students about historical perspectives that may alter the explanation or perspectives of US history taught through the conventional Eurocentric lens. Censorship represents a process of the dominant culture and its members to control the availability of dissemination of information about counter narratives from marginalized social groups. For example, Pinto (2013) described how governments shape the content of financial education curricula to serve the political economic agenda.

With regard to teacher education, censorship of standards to prevent or discourage attention to the diverse social foundations maintains an economic-based preparation philosophy that benefits members of the dominant culture. Aronson and Anderson (2013) describe the challenges with teacher accreditation processes in which governing bodies tend to discard, rather than define, controversial topics, such as social justice, that obstruct efforts towards creating efficient preparation of teachers.

This preparation environment fosters a teacher work force that lacks the willingness or ability to challenge efforts and curricular content that disempowers members of targeted cultural groups, and it threatens the discourse basis that critiques existent power structures. Preparation of teachers for professional practice that resist censorship efforts requires deliberate processes of recognizing issues of inequity and censorship, analyzing available professional responses, and equipping candidates for critical conversations. Meyer and Bradley (2013) indicate that preservice teachers may be taught to anticipate challenges associated with the teaching of controversial texts and respond to concerned parents and administrators. Teacher education is a context for preparing educators to advocate for equitable practices and laboratory pedagogy (Sleeter, 2013).

Nevertheless, in practice, teachers appear to lack the willingness to publically challenge the social power structures that guide and censor educational practice. Phillips and Larson's (2012) research indicates that a "code of silence" pervades the teaching profession with regard to materials subject to censor. Their analyses of teacher responses to public controversies and to a controversial text indicate that any challenges would occur in a private manner to avoid detection and punishment. Apple and Christian-Smith (1991) present ways in which the textbook goes unchallenged, avoiding controversial texts and topics for the sake of a safe, though oversimplified and whitewashed curriculum. Texts such as Howard Zinn's (2003) *A People's History of the United States* are neglected in contexts where administrators and teachers censor inquiry into representations of history that present a heroes and holidays approach to education (Banks, 2006)

Within education settings, teachers may attribute censorship to a lack of a variety of resources, but not their own ignorance or bias. Kallio (2015) reported that Finnish teachers censored their music instruction through cultural, curricular, and religious arguments. These decisions occurred because teaching conditions interfered with the teachers' social and professional beliefs. For example, teachers viewed students as holding uniform views about Christian ideals, ignoring the different perspectives and practices among members within Christianity and of different faiths.

At a social level, those in positions of power tend to resist responsibility or blame for conditions that put them in such positions. Dyson (2013) provided examples of legal cases that illustrate efforts to suppress the free speech of African Americans. While the legal challenges that provide the bases for these cases related to principles of free speech, the defense's arguments rationalized practices founded on principles of social stability. These legal challenges threatened to expose the censorship of dialogue about racially based discrimination. Education settings exacerbate these conditions by observing disparate racial achievement patterns, but failing to work cooperatively to bring about academic parity (Pollock, 2001).

The remainder of this paper describes a research study that concerned preservice teachers, their experience with coursework that involved banned and censored texts, and their senses of professional identity. Carr (2008) and Lucey (2012) document the thin citizenship notions held by teacher candidates and student teachers. By creating safe classroom settings that invite students to examine controversial citizenship, we encourage their acceptance of responsibility to consider such issues in their own classrooms.

Method

Overview of the Project

This qualitative study facilitated teacher candidates' creation of and reflections on lesson plans as they chose materials and topics in the context of learning about censorship of texts and ideas. The candidates were enrolled in instructional methods courses at a large public Midwestern university, and were studying issues related to banned and censored texts and taboo topics. Data sources included students' shared and individual reflections, lesson plans, their final projects, and instructor notes on class discussions. In this paper, we interpret the patterns of controversies evident through the texts selected by teacher candidates and the ways in which they discussed taboo topics. We provide accounts of several participants and interpret their perspectives on controversial issues at the beginning and end of the semester.

Participants and Context

Research participants were enrolled in either a secondary methods course (n=13) or one of two sections of an elementary social studies methods course (n=48) taught during the first semester of candidates' senior year. The students enrolled in the secondary methods course and in one section of the elementary social studies methods course were participants in a Professional Development School (PDS) program, a year-long internship completed during their senior year.

In the fall semester, candidates in the secondary program complete their coursework and conduct a minimum of 100 clinical hours, and during the spring semester, they student teach at the same site and with the same mentor teacher with whom they conducted their clinical semester. Elementary candidates complete their university coursework at a site assigned by the partner district. They conduct their clinical hours at two separate locations, changing sites midway through the fall semester. They encounter their student teaching during the spring semester. The study occurred in the fall semester during the candidates' clinical semester. Consent forms were distributed to students enrolled in the courses by an independent party who provided an envelope for completed forms. Instructors were not present in the classrooms when students made their decisions and put their signed or unsigned forms in the envelopes. For one section, students were contacted at the end of the semester after the instructor posted course grades.

Procedure, Data Collection and Analysis

Reflections. Over the semester, teacher candidates wrote five guided reflections about banned and censored books and taboo topics. The researchers/instructors prompted candidates to

write their first and last reflections and submit them to the instructor. They shared the middle three reflections online with small groups comprised of four to five peers with members from across the three methods courses. Within their groups, students read the reflections and responded to the ideas and questions raised. The shared reflections and responses were posted to a shared Dropbox folder. The instructors provided the following prompts to guide each of the five reflections:

1. (Individual) Introductory reflection: Describe who you are. What do you think it means to teach your specific content (elementary education students were prompted to discuss social studies)? What motivated you to become a teacher? How has your background prepared you for teaching your specific content (elementary education students were prompted to discuss social studies)? What role does democracy play in your conceptions of teaching? What are your conceptions of democracy in elementary or middle school? What are your views of citizenship and applications of freedom of speech in elementary school?
2. (Groups) Ideas about censorship: Describe your views on censorship. What social topics should elementary classrooms discuss? Who has the right to control content in school classrooms and libraries? How does this control relate to freedom of speech? Who makes the standards for your content area? Who has the right to decide what the standards are? What role do you have in standards development?
3. (Groups) Ideas about research and outcomes: Describe the results of your research into the banned or censored materials and taboo topics. How does the content of the banned or censored material relate to your conceptions of citizenship? What social groups may appreciate values expressed in your researched text? What social groups may be threatened by disseminating the content of your censored text? What can you deduce about censorship and social values from your classmates' presentations about banned or censored material?
4. (Groups) Ideas about instruction: Describe how the lesson that you developed based on the censored texts and taboo topics is similar to or different from lessons based on other materials that might be used for teaching in your content area? What decisions did you make as you developed your lesson and chose materials and questions to use in your lesson? How has your research into banned and censored books and development of related lessons informed your ideas about teaching citizenship and freedom of speech?

To what extent should a teacher be socially/politically active in teaching socially controversial issues?

5. (Individual) Concluding reflection: Review your introductory reflection: Describe how your research into democracy, citizenship, censorship, and freedom of speech has affected your views about teaching social studies. To what extent has your understanding of social studies changed during this course? How have your experiences examining democracy, citizenship and freedom of speech informed about your professional responsibilities as a classroom teacher?

The syllabi provided holistic instructions for responding to reflections, but did not ask students to respond in any particular way, except to refer specifically and substantively to what other group members discussed in their reflections. Students posted their reflections and responses electronically to a shared Dropbox folder.

Lesson Plans. The secondary students wrote one lesson plan for the course that highlighted applications of content literacy. Students were required to include a variety of literacy strategies and texts that supported content learning. Among the literacy strategies were explicit vocabulary instruction; multimodal literacy strategies for digital texts; strategies for before, during and after engaging with texts; and opportunities for students to consume (read, listen to, view) as well as to create texts (write, speak about, and design images). The elementary students completed two lesson plans for the course. The first was a citizenship and text lesson that required research of banned or censored texts and development of lesson plans that taught about the citizenship concepts presented in the selected texts. The other, a critical history lesson, necessitated their research of alternative accounts of commonly taught historical events and development of lessons to teach these alternative perspectives using the discipline-based art education (DBAE) instructional model.

Final Projects. At the conclusion of the course, teacher candidates completed a culminating project. The secondary students wrote a report called Insights into Texts for which they conducted a feature and content analysis of two texts they might use in teaching. As part of their analysis, they discussed ways in which banned or censored texts and/or taboo topics were considered controversial and by whom. The elementary students created and presented posters that represented their research on their selected banned or censored book.

Data Analysis. The data analysis centered on the notion that each course provided an internal logic, sense of order, structure, and meaning, as did each small group. Though both instructors provided the same prompts for reflection and assigned a summative representation of their ideas to conclude the project, the researchers/instructors acknowledge the differential influence of qualities such as our own understandings of and expectations for the assignments, our teaching styles, and students' immediate and long-term goals as students and as teachers.

We used two methodological approaches for constructing the study and for conducting data analysis, a modification of Ritchie and Spencer's framework analysis approach (1994) and a narrative analysis on the "small stories" (Bamburg, 2004; Watson, 2007) that emerged from the students' reflections. The framework approach (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994) allowed us to set the objectives of the research in advance, which were shaped by the requirements of the courses and the teacher education program. The research began with the purposes established by our project goals while it focused on the primary information sources generated by the participants. Each researcher analyzed the reflections of their respective students for emerging themes. Initial themes across sections related to views of censorship, social topics in the classroom, control/freedom of speech, standards, and connections to content. The objectives of this project concerned the facilitation of students' examination of banned and censored texts as vehicles for teaching about citizenship. We viewed the content and method of these two courses as lending themselves to the objectives of this project. Specifically, relevant course objectives required students to "demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, and use of major concepts and modes of inquiry from social studies in their preparation of developmentally appropriate instructional plans for teaching social studies," and to "demonstrate competencies in creating multicultural perspectives and democratic classroom practices necessary for developing effective citizenry."

A small story analysis allowed us to describe the "everyday, ephemeral narratives arising from talk-in-interaction" (Watson, 2007, abstract) among the teacher candidates. We acknowledge the reflection topics and the intentional grouping by the instructors guided the talk-in-interaction of the students. Nevertheless, the small stories that emerged provided a window into the participants co-constructed social worlds and their understandings about banned and censored texts and taboo topics. We organized our analytic findings into cases in order to represent the ways in which students thought about controversial texts and topics and how they could be included in lesson design and implementation.

Findings

In this section, we depict the nature of the controversies explored by teacher candidates. We also offer profiles of candidates who experienced the project, describing four case studies within the frameworks provided in the above discussion of the literature.

Presentation of Controversial Texts Explored through Teacher Candidates

In Tables 2 and 3, we list the texts explored by teacher candidates as part of the learning experience, organized by reading level. Either the students mentioned the texts in their reflections or included them in a lesson plan. They were discussed in the context of two broad categories, (1) the content or subject of the text, or (2) the classroom application. For example, texts like *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *And Tango Makes Three* deal with social issues such as racism, classism, and same-sex parents. Texts like a calculator or Facebook were considered for the controversy they cause as pedagogical tools. Use of a calculator in a classroom might seem controversial or taboo because of a belief among some educators that it is a crutch and allows students to learn math concepts and problem-solving without a solid grasp of math facts and other fundamentals. Facebook is a text that is blocked in many schools due to the concern of the distraction of social media and the controversial topics of discussion on some pages. Students discussed appropriate and beneficial uses of both kinds of texts and the reasons why some educators, administrators, and community members might deem them as taboo.

Table 2*Print Texts by School Level*

	Early Elementary	Upper Elementary	Middle Level	Secondary Level
<u>Print Texts</u>				
<i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i>			X	X
<i>Alice in April</i>		X		
<i>And Tango Makes Three</i>	X			
<i>The Awakening</i>				X
<i>Black Like Me</i>				X
<i>The Boy Who Looked Like Lincoln</i>		X		
<i>Bridge to Tabitha</i>		X	X	
<i>Captain Underpants</i>	X			
<i>The Catcher in the Rye</i>			X	X
<i>The Chocolate War</i>			X	X
<i>Crank</i>			X	X
<i>Dancing Naked</i>				X
<i>Discovering Mathematics</i>			X	X
<i>The Giver</i>			X	X
<i>The Grapes of Wrath</i>			X	X
<i>The Great Gatsby</i>				X
<i>How to Eat Fried Worms</i>		X		
Harry Potter series			X	X
<i>The Hunger Games</i>			X	X
<i>James and the Giant Peach</i>		X		
<i>The Jungle</i>				X
<i>King and King</i>	X	X		
<i>The Kite Runner</i>				X
<i>A Light in the Attic</i>	X	X		
<i>Lord of the Flies</i>			X	X
<i>The Lorax</i>	X		X	X
<i>Maus: A Survivor's Tale</i>			X	X
<i>Of Mice and Men</i>			X	X
<i>On the Origin of Species</i>				X
<i>The Rabbits' Wedding</i>	X			
<i>The Scarlet Letter</i>				X
<i>The Outsiders</i>			X	X
<i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i>		X	X	
"Tattoos and Piercings: Issues of Body Modification and the Workplace" (journal article)				X

<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>			X	X
<i>Twilight</i>			X	X
<i>Where the Wild Things Are</i>	X	X		

Table 3

Non-Print Texts, Organized by School Level

	Early Elementary	Upper Elementary	Middle Level	Secondary Level
<u>Non-Print Texts³</u>				
The Calculator	X	X	X	X
“Children in the Fields,” 60 <i>Minutes</i>			X	X
Facebook			X	X
<i>Flatland</i> (film)			X	X
<i>An Inconvenient Truth</i>			X	X
“Parents caught spanking children on audiotape real time,” <i>ABC News</i> (video)			X	X
<i>Strange Fruit</i> (song)			X	X
Twitter			X	X

Teacher Candidate Cases

We describe four case studies. All names are pseudonyms. Each presentation begins with a description of the candidates’ emphasis in their teacher education studies and continues with a

³ The secondary methods class was exploring alternative definitions of text, specifically Draper & Siebert’s (2010) notion that texts are representational resources or objects imbued with meaning to achieve a particular purpose.

summary of the major ideas regarding censorship, citizenship, and the role of the teacher in dealing with taboo topics expressed through reflections and lesson planning. We follow each presentation with an interpretation of the case in terms of citizenship theories and postures towards controversial issues described above.

Case 1, Alicia

Alicia, an elementary candidate from a suburban setting, entered the course targeting a social studies endorsement. Her view of a democratic classroom involved a teacher listening to the students' voices. She held a personally responsible view of citizenship that lent itself to altruistic sentiments. She attempted to strike a balance in her views of censorship, advocating for freedom of expression, yet recommending professional discretion.

Citizenship and freedom of speech go hand-in-hand because in order for a school to have good citizenship, students need to feel free to speak about how they feel about issues taking place inside and outside of their school. Children should have the freedom to speak freely within schools while maintaining a high level of respect for teachers and administrators. (August, 22)

Censorship guidelines were viewed as being a state-level responsibility. She did not consider full freedom of speech as an education right, yet advocated students' and teachers' right to speak out about particular subjects. The book she chose for her lesson, *How to Eat Fried Worms*, has been censored because of references to gambling. She recognized the presence of censorship and her responsibility to infuse banned works into her teaching.

I believe that many parents and teachers would support this book because it encourages young children, specifically boys, to read. Parents and teachers may also like the idea that the book presents values such as working hard and never giving up. (October 5)

She viewed the process of reflection, investigating, and discussing as instrumental in broadening her views about citizenship teaching and considered talking about social issues in the classroom as acceptable. She held that teachers should not express their own views; however, they should support students' efforts. Alicia viewed her conceptions of social studies as positively changed from those at the beginning of the course and recognized the importance of teaching critical thinking and justice-orientations.

After taking this course, I feel that I can honestly say that my views on the subject of social studies have completely changed for the better. I now view social studies as a subject that

can be taught with excitement and engagement among the students in the classroom...I now realize the importance of developing students' critical thinking so that they are able to question the world that surrounds them. (December, 11)

Alicia transitioned to a thicker view of citizenship through the course. Originally expressing the views of a personally responsible citizen, towards the end of the course she recognized the importance of justice-oriented thinking and processes. Her views of covering controversial issues in classrooms transitioned from one of guiding discussions, involving limitations to argument, to one of encouraging students through neutral impartiality.

Case 2, Stephanie

An elementary candidate, Stephanie, introduced herself as a bilingual childhood immigrant and advocated social studies learning for the development of global awareness and sensitivity. Though motivated to be a teacher--she came from a family of educators--she had not given much thought to democracy in education. However, she thought it important for students to learn about democracy and their surrounding environments. She considered students too immature to experience completely free speech in school.

I believe it is important for students, especially in middle school, to learn about democracy and slowly become a bit familiarized with what goes on around them so that they can have good background knowledge when it comes to learning more in depth...It is important to listen to all students and hear what they have to say, however, I do not believe that they are maturely developed enough to understand the consequences of their language and how it may affect other students. Because of this, I think that if students knew they were able to have full freedom on what they could say in school, they would abuse this right by harming others feelings or using it negatively. (August, 24)

Stephanie researched *And Tango Makes Three* and its banning because of its presentation of homosexuality. She considered the book as a good introduction of the topic because of the compassion that the text conveyed. The project taught her about the variety of topics that may offend people; however, it also prompted her realization that censorship efforts should not affect teacher views of students' ability to responsibly deal with social issues. She expressed a positive outlook on society and its tendencies towards multicultural acceptance. She viewed censorship as a convoluted issue that would not be readily resolved. She questioned the overprotection of

American youth from existing international ills, yet recognized the relevance of developmental appropriateness.

It honestly never came to my mind that teachers or even textbooks for that matter would have information in them which is not true. It makes sense that the authors want to make America look like the best country in the world, but there are enough things that America has done to prove it. I think that students would benefit knowing the truth about misdoings that have happened in our past and I was really surprised to learn that they have been censored from them. (December 11).

She considered homosexuality an important topic to be addressed in schools; however, was uncertain where appropriateness ended and inappropriateness began. She viewed state directives as having precedence over controversial or censored topics. Her lesson related to family and relationships and she recognized the importance of freedom of speech; however, she stated that teachers have curricular limitations, as they cannot overrule parents. She learned the censorship challenges related to social studies teaching and the importance of facing consequences for challenging the community. She considered the importance of developing social networks to empower teachers' academic freedom.

Stephanie maintained her views on citizenship through the course. Originally expressing the views of a participatory citizen, she held a view of social networking within the system. Her views of addressing controversial issues in classrooms remained one of exclusive neutrality, with the meeting of curricular standards holding precedence over controversial issues.

Case Study 3: Nora

An English education major, Nora desired to teach diverse students in an urban setting. She positioned herself well for this opportunity by studying abroad and participating in her university's urban education summer internship program. She believed that gaining empathy and respect is an "outcome" of studying a range of texts and types of literature and a "requirement" for complex understandings of challenging texts. She chose to investigate *Maus: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History*, a graphic novel, and *Of Mice and Men*. She argued that *Maus* should only be read in school by high school juniors and seniors because the combination of words and images portraying pain and death during the Holocaust require a level of "empathy that can only come with maturity, academic guidance, and reflection." Studying historical events and associated issues of identity and ethnicity "ensures that a student's understanding of such an event is not

trivialized.” She came to believe that while students should choose what they read and teachers should expose students to an “array of texts,” sometimes “small amounts of censorship” can be reasonably practiced. Schools are accountable for the materials they introduce, so “precautionary steps” should be taken to avoid mistrust and misunderstanding. She stated that teachers must work closely with administrators and students’ families to form good relationships and effectively “poke at the boundaries of censorship” since “communities around the world, within different states, and even on the same block are probably going to have different opinions about censoring material.” She believed it is worthwhile for students to “question censorship motivations,” for example, when books such as *Of Mice and Men* move from popular to canonical status. She realized that censorship is much more complex than she believed and was eager to teach about controversial texts so students could research and argue their positions.

Nora held a perspective of neutral impartiality, encouraging students’ views of controversial texts. Her valuing of collaboration among education stakeholders indicated that she held the view of a participatory citizenship, solving social problems within existing structures.

Case Study 4: Cody

A business education major, Cody went into teaching because his college business courses bored him “to death.” He earned excellent grades in those courses with little effort, and he cared even less about the knowledge he was “banking.” He believed teaching must be “interesting, thought-provoking, and important.” Students need opportunities to ask “why?” in order to understand course content. Teaching about controversial issues creates “a sticky situation” that he says schools do not want to address; he believes pacifying people on both sides of an issue is impossible. He believes democratic schools desire to “acclimate” students “to the world,” so it is necessary to “teach them both sides” of issues and let the students decide what to believe. It is a “disservice” to students if we prevent them from grappling with real world controversies, “such as outsourcing,” before they enter the workforce. Cody chose a *60 Minutes* video, “Children in the Fields” as a text for potential use in his future classroom. The video presents the complexities of child labor by following a family as they work in cotton fields in Lubbock, Texas. It explores the family’s financial need to send their children to labor in the fields, as well as some associated dangers and disadvantages presented by this decision. Cody liked the way the video expresses “both sides” of the issue and as a teacher would allow his students to evaluate the information, comparing their opinions before and after watching it. While Cody often discussed controversial

issues as binaries, he raised the question of how students' beliefs about a controversial issue such as child labor, might be influenced by their views on a related issue like illegal immigration, but hoped they could separate the issues and analyze them separately.

Cody expressed an exclusive position on controversial issues, considering them difficult topics of instruction that involved two positions. His approach to citizenship resembled an additive approach to multicultural education in which he would provide supplemental content for students' consideration.

Discussion and Implications

Teacher candidates viewed education of citizens for democracy through lenses crafted by developmental socialization. The case studies presented above illustrate teacher candidates who possess responsible or participatory perspectives of citizenship and largely conceptualize a curricular approach that reaffirms the views of the dominant culture, while implementing discussions of controversial texts and ideas in a manner that avoids disruption of stakeholder relationships.

For example, Alicia's initial efforts to balance freedom of speech with respect for authority serve to permit expression within an established system. Westheimer (2015) observes that justice-oriented citizenship involves practices that challenge the established social structure. It creates for power structures that disrupt established ideologies.

Stephanie's excusing her resistance to controversial topics on students' developmental maturity serves as a protectionist attempt to resist social challenges. James (2008) describes how elementary candidates readily resist teaching social studies content that they perceive as harmful to children's development. Thus, while coverage of controversial issues may have conceptual allure for teacher candidates, concerns about harming children or inciting social controversies discourse their implementation. For example, how does a teacher address the threat of employment security covering an issue that may cause community unrest?

None of the students conveyed justice-oriented teaching ideas in their reflections. Elementary candidates viewed the value of texts as affirming traditional views of hard work and compassion for others. Secondary candidates valued texts for the complex perspectives related to the presented issues. Controversial texts thus seemed to present opportunities for candidates to emphasize traditional citizenship values and explore complex thinking. Yet, they did not explore systematic notions of social change.

Our findings confirm the conditions described by Hess (2008), who writes “...contradiction exists in the literature. Although many teachers and students report social studies classes as being rich with controversial issues discussion, when researchers observe social studies classes, they rarely find discussion of any sort and little attention to controversial issues.” (p. 127).

Efforts to manage harmonious classroom communities indicate a resistance to content that may prompt a sense of togetherness. The emphasis illustrates an environment that strives for uniformity with standards while limiting perspectives to those that do not threaten the social order. The use of controversial texts serves to present the acceptability of different ideas within the context of the dominant culture. Banned or censored texts may be present in the classroom; however, their employment may not serve to disrupt standard patterns of discourse. These pre-service teachers may value controversy; yet, limit its presence within a system of democratic order. They affirm Byford et al.’s (2009) observation that teachers perceive of limited application of these such topics in their teaching. These observations are consistent with Garrett and Segall’s (2013) resistance strategies of rationalizing threats to the dominant culture by through the dominant ideology.

We perceive an effect much like that in Kallio’s (2015) work in which the preservice teachers limit their own use of banned and censored texts to fit the professional obligations of their practice. Banned and censored texts represent offer opportunities to challenge the values of society conveyed through the formal curriculum. Social studies textbooks convey a message of historical and present unity and loyalty, rather than diversity and discussion. Loewen (2007) provides the following observation.

It is hard for teachers to teach open-endedly. They are afraid not to be in control of the answer, afraid of losing their authority over the class. ... They end up adopting the same omniscient tone as their textbooks. As a result, teachers present a boring, overly ordered way of thinking, much less interesting than the way people really think. (p. 328).

Conclusion

When introduced to banned and censored texts related to citizenship, teacher candidates conceptually appreciated the notion of exploring controversial citizenship issues with students. The significance of this paper lies in its description of a project that purposefully assigned preservice teachers’ investigation and discussion of banned and censored texts. This work

informs the community about the attitudes of preservice teachers towards the use of controversial texts in the preparation of teacher candidates.

We encourage studies that interpret the efforts and strategies of candidates to implement selected texts in their teaching. Such research may consider the administrative and community conditions under which they occur.

Teacher education provides experiences and opportunities to use banned and censored texts to develop candidates' critical thinking about democratic society and apply it in their professional practice. The cultivation of safe environments that invite candidate discussion about controversial social topics models represents a viable option for fostering engaging conversation.

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