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**Perceptions of Citizenship in  
Preservice Elementary Social Studies Education**

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**Introduction**

The relationship between democratic citizenship and public schooling has been an enduring theme in U.S. educational and social theory. Among the responsibilities and the long-standing rhetorical appeal put before America's public schools is the preparation of the Nation's students to inherit their roles as citizens in a democracy.<sup>1</sup> Historically, our American ancestors believed that a complete education was the academic nurturing of young minds as well as the development of personal integrity, character, and democratic citizenship. As the years pass, our nation becomes an increasingly diverse people, drawn from many racial, national, linguistic, and religious origins. The American cultural heritage is as diverse as our people, with multiple sources of vitality and pride. However, our political heritage is one – the vision of a common life in liberty, justice, and equality, articulated over two hundred years ago in the Declaration of Independence and the

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<sup>1</sup> Todd Dinkleman, "Conceptions of Democratic Citizenship in Preservice Social Studies Teacher Education: A Case Study" (paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Montreal, Canada, April 1999).

Constitution.<sup>2</sup> The United States and its democracy are constantly evolving and in continuous need of citizens who can adapt its enduring traditions and values to meet these changes. The mission of social studies is to prepare students to meet that need.<sup>3</sup>

In the twenty-first century, it has become clear that the dominant, social, economic, cultural, and scientific trends that have defined the western world for the past five centuries are quickly leading in new directions. “New issues, together with old problems, will confront us and tax our intellectual and moral fiber, making it increasingly difficult to implement the goals that define us as a nation.”<sup>4</sup> Our nation is changing, including the nature of our families, the reconceptualization of work, the distribution of justice and poverty, and the age, class, gender and ethnic makeup of our people.<sup>5</sup> “Preserving and expanding the American experiment in liberty is a challenge for each succeeding generation. No profession plays a more central role in meeting this challenge than the social studies teachers in our nation’s schools.”<sup>6</sup> In no other curricular area has the talk of democratic citizenship been more prevalent than social studies. The role of education in general and social studies education in particular is to “foster a reasoned commitment to the founding principles and values that bind us together as people.”<sup>7</sup>

However, with the current “high-stakes” educational testing environment in elementary schools where the focus has been on math and reading, education for an active and responsible citizenship has received little attention, and citizenship education has not been fully integrated into many standards-based curriculums in today’s classrooms. A message is being sent that “civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes are not valued.”<sup>8</sup> Those endeared to social studies as a form of preparation for democratic citizenship have cause for concern, due to a majority of students rarely having the kinds of experiences that might give them practice in developing democratic habits of mind.<sup>9</sup> Fostering a commitment to fundamental democratic principles, values, and civic

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Gagnon. “History’s Role in Civic Education: The Precondition for Political Intelligence,” in *Educating the Democratic Mind*, ed. Walter C. Parker. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 249.

<sup>3</sup> National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), *Expectation of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*. (Washington, DC: NCSS, 1994). <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/preface>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Haynes et al., “Fostering Civic Virtue: Character Education in the Social Studies,” *Social Education* 61 (1997): 225.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Carnegie Corporation of New York & The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE), (2003), “The Civic Mission of Schools,” accessed October 29, 2009, <http://www.civicmissionofschools.org/site/campaign/documents/CivicMissionofSchools.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Dinkelman, “Conceptions of Democratic Citizenship.”

dispositions are an essential component of social studies education.<sup>10</sup> If the true mission of education is active citizenship, then it is imperative to help students understand the value of democratic citizenship. If social studies teachers are expected to accomplish these tasks, social studies teacher educators are faced with the challenge of preparing teachers for this role.<sup>11</sup>

In order to develop an educated citizenry, preservice teachers are in the unique position to develop into future elementary teachers who possess a commitment to educate their students to become effective and responsible citizens. In their 1997 position statement, “Fostering Civic Virtue: Character Education in the Social Studies,” the National Council for the Social Studies extends the following challenge to social studies educators:

Social studies teachers have a responsibility and a duty to refocus their classrooms on the teaching of character and civic virtue. They should not be timid or hesitant about working toward these goals. The fate of the American experiment in self- government depends in no small part on the store of civic virtue that resides in the American people. The social studies profession of this nation has a vital role to play in keeping this wellspring of civic virtue flowing.<sup>12</sup>

Teacher training and methods courses must facilitate preservice teachers’ beliefs about the importance and potential for social studies in the elementary grades. “If the social studies are not part of the elementary curriculum, we cannot expect our children to be prepared to understand or participate effectively in an increasingly complex world.”<sup>13</sup> In order for social studies and its goal for an educated citizenry to become more of a priority in our elementary classrooms, preservice educators must instruct teacher candidates in understanding that the social studies content provides the greatest potential for interdisciplinary learning.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, “the elementary school years are important in that they are the ones in which children develop a foundation for the entire social

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<sup>10</sup> Andrew J. Milson, “Social Studies Teacher Educators’ Perceptions of Character Education,” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 28 (2000): 145.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> National Council for the Social Studies, “Fostering Civic Virtue: Character Education in the Social Studies. Position Statement,” *National Council for the Social Studies*, 1997, <http://www.socialstudies.org/positions/character>.

<sup>13</sup> National Council for the Social Studies. “Social Studies for Early Childhood and Elementary School Children-Preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *Social Education*, 53 (1989): 14-22.

<sup>14</sup> Judith M. Finkelstein, Lynn E. Nielsen., and Thomas Switzer, “Primary Elementary Social Studies Instruction: A Status Report,” *Social Education*, 57, (1993): 68.

studies program and a beginning sense of efficacy as participating citizens of their world.”<sup>15</sup>

If schools are to educate for democratic citizenship, the manner in which preservice teacher education helps teacher candidates to understand citizenship and how it will be utilized in their future teaching practices, is a true concern. When considering the civic foundations of teacher education, “there has been relatively little specific attention paid to the way the K-12 school curriculum should prepare all students for their rights and obligations of citizenship in a complex world, and the way all teachers and professional educators should be prepared to carry out this goal in the curriculum and in the conduct of schools.”<sup>16</sup> In fact, very little is known about how social studies teachers view the aim of democratic citizenship as they leave preservice programs.<sup>17</sup>

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to examine elementary social studies preservice teachers’ and professors’ perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs concerning their role in promoting and teaching citizenship education; and (2) to examine the elementary social studies professors’ role in integrating citizenship education during the methods course of the teacher preparation program. In particular, I examined the alignment between preservice teachers’ and professors’ understandings of citizenship education and considered how the elementary social studies methods course activities enhanced and/or developed preservice teachers’ beliefs and knowledge for teaching citizenship within their future elementary classrooms.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study was based on Westheimer and Kahne’s three conceptions of citizenship, the *personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented citizen*,<sup>18</sup> definitions of citizenship education and character education, as well as elementary social studies preservice teacher preparation. Literature related to these concepts is discussed and was used to examine preservice teachers’ and professors’ perceptions and understandings about citizenship education.

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<sup>15</sup> NCSS, “Social Studies for Early Childhood.”

<sup>16</sup> R. Freeman Butts and William F. Russell, “The Time is Now: To Frame the Civic Foundations of Teacher Education,” *Journal of Teacher Education* 44 (1993): 326.

<sup>17</sup> 17. Susan A. Adler, “The Education of Social Studies Teachers,” in *Handbook of Research on Social Studies Teaching and Learning*, ed. James P. Shaver (New York: MacMillan, 1991), 210-221; Beverly Armento, “The Professional Development of Social Studies Educators,” in *Handbook of Research on Social Studies Education*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. by John Sikula, T.J. Buttery, and Edith Guyton (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1996), 485-502.

<sup>18</sup> Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne, “What Kind of Citizen? The Politics of Educating for Democracy,” *American Educational Research Journal* 41(2004): 239.

**Conceptions of Citizenship.** Westheimer and Kahne’s three conceptions of citizenship (*personally responsible*, *participatory*, and *justice oriented*) were utilized in order to answer the following question that is of central importance for both practitioners and scholars: “What kind of citizen do we need to support an effective democratic society?”<sup>19</sup> These three conceptions of citizenship helped define a “good citizen.” To elucidate, the *personally responsible citizen* attempts to build character and personal responsibility by emphasizing honesty, integrity, self-discipline, and hard work. A personally responsible citizen can be characterized by participating in the following activities: picking up litter, giving blood, recycling, obeying laws, staying out of debt, and volunteering for those less fortunate. Proponents of the character education movement frequently advance such perspectives. The *participatory citizen* is one who engages in collective, community-based efforts and actively participates in the civic affairs and social life of the community at the local, state, or national level. This can include planning and participating in organized efforts to care for people in need. In contrast to the personally responsible citizen who may donate cans of food for the homeless, a participatory citizen might organize the food drive. This perspective adopts a broad notion of the political sphere, one where citizens with competing but overlapping interests can work and live together.<sup>20</sup> The final image of a good citizen is the *justice-oriented citizen*. This type of citizen needs opportunities to analyze and understand the interplay of social, economic, and political forces and seeks to improve society by critically analyzing and addressing social issues and injustices. Instead of emphasizing the need for charity and volunteerism as ends in itself, a justice-oriented citizen wants to effect systemic change. A justice-oriented citizen’s purpose is to consider collective strategies for change that challenge injustice and address root causes of programs, weighing the varied opinions and arguments of others, and communicates with and learns from those who hold different perspectives.<sup>21</sup>

**Citizenship Education.** What is citizenship education? Although diverse views exist among the definition of citizenship, the perceptions and understanding used in this study were based on the following definitions of citizenship education. *Citizenship education* is “any conscious or overt effort to develop students’ knowledge of government, law, and politics as those have evolved through history and presently operate in our society. That knowledge includes knowledge of the core values of our democracy.”<sup>22</sup> It should help young people acquire and learn to use the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will prepare them to be competent and responsible citizens throughout their lives. Explicitly, competent and responsible citizens:

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 241-242.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 242-243.

<sup>22</sup> John D. Hoge, “Character Education, Citizenship Education, and the Social Studies,” *The Social Studies* 93 (2002):105.

1. are informed and thoughtful; have a grasp and an appreciation of history and the fundamental processes of American democracy; have an understanding and awareness of public and community issues; and have the ability to obtain information, think critically, and enter into dialogue among others with different perspectives.
2. participate in their communities through membership in or contributions to organizations working to address an array of cultural, social, political, and religious interests and beliefs.
3. act politically by having the skills, knowledge, and commitment needed to accomplish public purposes, such as group problem solving, public speaking, petitioning and protesting, and voting.
4. have moral and civic virtues such as concern for the rights and welfare of others, social responsibility, tolerance and respect, and belief in the capacity to make a difference.<sup>23</sup>

According to the National Council for the Social Studies, a citizenship education program is considered to be effective if the program includes knowledge, skills, and values that are taught explicitly and systematically at every grade level, and it is integrated throughout and across the curriculum, where all students are provided with opportunities to participate in the civic life of their school and community extending beyond the school day and include parent participation. It should demonstrate core democratic values throughout the management and culture of the school and the classroom. Effective citizenship education programs should provide students with opportunities to participate in simulations, service-learning projects, conflict resolution programs, and other activities that encourage the application of civic knowledge, skills, and values (e.g., meaningful opportunities to participate in class and school governance). All students should receive instruction on our Nation's founding documents, civic institutions, political process, the people, history, and traditions that have shaped our local communities, our nation, and the world. Finally, preparing students to be effective citizens should be explicitly recognized as an important part of the school mission.<sup>24</sup>

**Character Education vs. Citizenship Education.** Based on preservice teachers' and professors' responses on what characterizes citizenship education, I thought it was important to note the distinctions between character education and citizenship education in order to clarify my definition of citizenship education. *Character education* is principally centered on character traits, focusing on the development of desirable habits that include a wide range of outcome goals, including moral development.<sup>25</sup> Its

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<sup>23</sup> CIRCLE, "The Civic Mission of Schools.

<sup>24</sup> National Council for the Social Studies, "Creating Effective Citizens. Position Statement," *National Council for the Social Studies*, last modified May 2001, <http://www.socialstudies.org/positions/effectivecitizens>.

<sup>25</sup> Wolfgang Althof and Marvin Berkowitz, "Moral Education and Character Education: Their Relationship and Roles in Citizenship Education." *Journal of Moral Education* 35 (2006): 498.

instructional concern is the internalization of prosocial behaviors, as well as moral concepts, manners, and civility.<sup>26</sup> The principle difference between character education and citizenship education is the focus of their central concerns, with character education's focus being the improvement of people as individuals and the main focus of citizenship education being the improvement of government. Although both contents include civic dispositions and virtues, their dominant instructional methods differ. Character education includes trait-of-the-week instruction, slogans, instructive biography, and rewards programs, while citizenship education strategies include such things as direct instruction on government, law, and politics; issues based discussion; mock trials; field trips; simulations; and participation in student government.<sup>27</sup> Although citizenship education is also concerned with morality, the key difference between it and character education can be found in the information about and other references to society, social problems, and political contexts.<sup>28</sup>

**Preservice Teacher Preparation in Social Studies Methods.** "One goal of teacher preparation programs has been the development of teachers who can prepare the students in their classrooms to become effective citizens in a democratic society."<sup>29</sup> Research has shown that preservice teacher educators need to establish a clear agenda for the integration of civic knowledge and pedagogy within their social studies methods courses in order to prepare future teachers to involve their own students in democratic preparation.<sup>30</sup> However, it has been found that there are barriers to developing democratic classroom teachers, including the development of preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs that democratic practice is important and that there is no consensus as to the ideal program for preparing democratic teachers.<sup>31</sup> Although, one study found social studies methods classes with higher levels of democratic practice or instruction integrated in the social studies methods course had higher levels of student knowledge of how to implement democratic practice into their future classrooms.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Hoge, "Character Education," 104; Althof and Berkowitz, "Moral Education," 512.

<sup>27</sup> Hoge, "Character Education," 106; Althof and Berkowitz, "Moral Education," 510.

<sup>28</sup> Ian Davies, Stephen Gorard, and Nick McGuinn, "Citizenship Education and Character Education: Similarities and Contrasts," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 53 (2005): 341-358.

<sup>29</sup> Caroline R. Pryor and Brandt W. Pryor, "Preservice Teachers' Attitudes and Beliefs about Democratic Classroom Practice: Influences on Intentions for Pedagogical Integration," *Current Issues in Education* 8 (2005): Accessed October 27, 2010. <http://cie.asu.edu/volume8/number6/index.html>.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> O.L. Davis, Jr., "Does Democracy in Education Still Live?" *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 19 (2003): 1-4; Joe L. Kincheloe, "The Knowledges of Teacher Education: Developing a Critical Complex Epistemology," *Teacher Education Quarterly* 31 (2004): 49-66; Walter C. Parker, "Curriculum for Democracy," In *Democracy, Education, and Schooling*, ed. Roger Soder (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 182-210; Caroline R. Pryor, *Democratic Practice Workbook: Activities for the Field Experience* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2000); John I. Goodlad, "Democracy, Education and Community," In *Democracy, Education, and Schooling*, ed. Roger Soder (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 87-124.

<sup>32</sup> Pryor and Pryor, "Preservice Teachers' Attitudes and Beliefs."

Additional challenges for preservice educators include: the generally negative perceptions of social studies held by many preservice elementary teachers; the persistent belief that other subjects in the curriculum, such as language arts, reading, math, and science, are more desirable to teach than social studies; confusion over the definition of social studies; the ability to persuade elementary teachers to adopt and teach the social studies goal of working to improve society; the continuing expansion of the number of topics deemed pertinent to social studies education at the preservice level; and the difficulty of effectively utilizing a concurrent field experience.<sup>33</sup> Despite these challenges, research has also shown that greater effort must be made by elementary social studies professors to guide preservice teachers in developing a repertoire of strategies that include more frequent use of simulation, debate, technology, the use of original documents, and the active involvement of students in activities that stress the development of civic and democratic values.<sup>34</sup> According to Pryor and Pryor, social studies methods courses should be restructured in order to increase two aspects of democratic practice: (a) civic knowledge and (b) pedagogical approach. This includes specific strategies within the methods course, such as: (a) allocation of course time for professors and students to discuss the definitions and implications of democratic principles in school settings; and (b) course grades highly weighting evaluation of students' skills in analyzing and implementing democratic classroom practice.<sup>35</sup>

## Methodology

This qualitative research study utilized the basic interpretive approach to examine the relationship between the beliefs of citizenship education and the instructional strategies used to prepare preservice elementary social studies teachers to teach citizenship in their future elementary classrooms. The study focused on a purposeful sample of preservice elementary teachers and their professors from public and private universities and colleges located in a Midwestern state. The study described here was part of a larger project involving survey research, document analysis, and interviews with 75 preservice teachers enrolled in elementary social studies education methods courses and 14 elementary social studies methods professors from 15 different colleges and universities during the Fall 2008 or Spring 2009 semesters. The preservice teachers and professors who participated in the larger portion of this study closely resemble the demographic characteristics of traditionally certified teachers across the nation in that they are mostly White (93% preservice teachers; 85% professors) and female (91% preservice teachers; 86% professors). Although the original study involved survey

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<sup>33</sup> Mary Beth Henning and Diane Yendol-Hoppey, "Context in Methods Course Learning: Lessons for Partnership Work," *Teaching Education* 15 (2004): 401-416; William T. Owens, "The Challenges of Teaching Social Studies Methods to Preservice Elementary Teachers," *The Social Studies* 88 (1997): 113-120.

<sup>34</sup> Joy A. Morin, "A Research Study Designed to Improve the Preparation of Social Studies Teachers," *Education* 117 (1996): 241-251.

<sup>35</sup> Pryor and Pryor, "Preservice Teachers' Attitudes and Beliefs."



research, document analysis, and interviews, this paper draws mainly from interview data with a smaller group of 18 participants.

**Participants.** Professors from 23 higher educational institutions who taught the elementary social studies methods course during the Fall 2008 or Spring 2009 semesters were initially contacted via email or phone for participation in this study. In order to recruit preservice teachers and maintain student confidentiality, professors were asked to forward an email to their preservice teachers to solicit their participation in the study. Data for the interview portion of this study was collected from 15 of the colleges and universities. One of the major state universities was not included in the final purposeful sampling since my advisor and I were the instructors for the elementary social studies methods courses during these semesters.

Nine preservice teachers and nine professors were willing to participate in the interview portion of the study, giving 18 total interview participants. Of the nine professors who decided to participate in the interview process, all nine were female instructors representing 9 different universities. Three of the professors had earned their doctorate (33.3%), while six had earned their master's degree (66.7%). Two of the professors were tenured, while four indicated that they were on the tenure track. The remaining professors indicated that they were on a non tenure-track or were graduate teaching assistants. Professor's elementary teaching and collegiate teaching experience varied, ranging from 6 years to more than 15 years teaching experience in the elementary classroom, while most of the professors (66.7%) had between 6 to 10 years collegiate teaching experience. Eight of the professors were White (Non Hispanic/European American) and one professor was African American.

The nine preservice teacher interview participants represented 7 of the participating colleges or universities. Seven of the preservice teachers were female, and two were male. Six of the preservice teachers were juniors while taking the course, two were seniors, and one was a non-traditional student. Eight of the preservice teachers indicated their racial background with seven indicating White (Non Hispanic/European American) and one Hispanic or Latino. One student preferred not to indicate his or her racial background.

**Interviews and Analysis.** Eighteen individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted with preservice teachers and professors in order to elicit their perceptions about citizenship education and its role during the elementary social studies methods course. Questions from the interview overlapped several topic areas from the online survey which allowed participants to elaborate and extend the data. The questions from the interview were open-ended and included hypothetical and ideal position questions in order to elicit information, perceptions, and approximations of their likely actions in

classroom settings.<sup>36</sup> Questions from the interview were piloted with my Fall 2008 elementary social studies preservice teachers in order to refine the interview protocol. Each interview was conducted via telephone and was recorded in its entirety. All interviews were transcribed in full, and efforts were made to transcribe interview responses verbatim. Efforts to ensure the descriptive, interpretive, and theoretical validity were also made by soliciting feedback from professor and preservice teacher participants regarding their individual interview transcripts.<sup>37</sup>

The constant comparative method of analysis was employed to conceptualize and categorize data, including the use of a set of rigorous coding procedures to develop theoretically informed interpretations of the data.<sup>38</sup> Data analysis was inductive and identified common themes and emerging patterns using content analysis of the eighteen preservice teacher and professor interviews. Moreover, I triangulated findings across different respondents, survey and interview methods, and relevant theoretical literature.<sup>39</sup>

## Results

All of the preservice teachers and professors interviewed in this study discussed the importance of citizenship education within the elementary curriculum. Following is a discussion of the interview findings with details that support and explain each finding. Three themes emerged from the interviews: professors' views on citizenship education; preservice teachers' perceptions of citizenship and citizenship education; and the instructional strategies that were used to teach citizenship during the elementary social studies methods course. Quotations from participants are used to expand and illuminate the themes, as well as to give voice to the participants.

### Professors' Views on Citizenship Education

As the professors in this study discussed their views on what preservice teachers' should know and understand about the meaning of citizenship, an overwhelming majority of professors mentioned that the main value of teaching social studies was its importance for citizenship development. Eight of the nine professors (89%) mentioned that students need to learn how to be *good citizens*. The professors' responses were most in alignment with Westheimer and Kahne's conceptions of citizenship.<sup>40</sup> For example, interview

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<sup>36</sup> Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education: Revised and Expanded from Case Study Research in Education* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers, 1998), 76.

<sup>37</sup> Joseph A. Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach* (California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2005), 115.

<sup>38</sup> Anselm L. Strauss and Juliet M. Corbin, *Grounded Theory in Practice* (California: Sage Publications, Inc., 1997), 5.

<sup>39</sup> Norman K. Denzin, *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 301-310.

<sup>40</sup> Westheimer and Kahne, "What Kind of Citizen?" 239-243.

responses mostly resembled the conceptions of the *participatory citizen* and the *personally responsible citizen* and included the following citizenship themes: being an active citizen, being an informed citizen, being a responsible citizen, being a good citizen, understanding your rights as a citizen, citizenship values, and the perpetuation of a democracy. The themes overlapped one another in many of the professors' comments. One professors' comment on citizenship included:

Perpetuation of a democracy. I think if children are not taught these things, and if we don't teach our preservice teachers how to teach these things [citizenship knowledge, skills, and values], we endanger democracy. We endanger our [United States] form of government...there are so many other places kids can pull from to create and inform decisions and their ideas about things, that if they are not guided in the historical thinking and the current thinking, in the process of governing, in the how to participate as an active citizen in the community, if they don't learn about geography, about sociology, about economics, then their decisions are informed by a very small, very swayed pool of information...It's necessary for them to have this [content knowledge].

Although a majority of professors indicated on their survey responses that it was important for preservice teachers to have more of a *justice-oriented* conception of citizenship<sup>41</sup> and should provide students with the knowledge and skills that are needed to affect change in our society, only one professor discussed these concepts with her preservice teachers. Her preservice teacher discussed how the social studies methods course helped reinforce his own justice-oriented conception of citizenship that he held prior to the elementary social studies methods course. He explained:

I want to help these kids understand how they can change the world, and it's not just [about taking] state assessments. It's...making these kids to be better citizens...I guess [before] coming into the class, I wasn't sure if I was going to be able to [do] things like that.

**Knowledge.** Professors also felt that students should know how to provide the knowledge, skills, processes, and values needed for membership in our society, as well as understanding individual rights and obligations to the common good. When discussing the knowledge preservice teachers needed, they felt that they needed to have a foundational knowledge of the other social studies disciplines, like history, civics, and economics. One professor discussed how important it is for elementary students to be presented with this foundational knowledge and that preservice teachers should explain why the social studies disciplines are important to their future students. She felt it was important for students to make a personal connection to social studies, instead of focusing

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 242-243.

on people, facts, and dates; rather, they should be focused on themes and patterns such as historical time frames, human interactions, and political events. She explained:

[These] are other certain elements that one just needs to know...they have to have an over-arching foundation of just the different themes for each one of the disciplines.

In addition to discussing knowing the social studies disciplines, one professor mentioned specific citizenship content that should be taught, specifically core citizenship or civics. She felt that it was important for students to understand their First Amendment rights, including being able to identify them, knowing what they are, and knowing when to use them. Moreover, it was necessary for them to understand the three branches of government, including how the government works, what their vote is worth, and the value of participating in things such as their own student government and their own city council. She also felt that it was important for students to understand right from wrong, specifically the value of adhering to rules and how rules and laws are made.

**Values.** A majority of the professors (78%) also discussed the importance of integrating values within citizenship education. One of the most striking aspects about the professors' views on citizenship was that most of the professors stated that citizenship should be taught through lessons that emphasize morality and good conduct in personal and private affairs, as well as the need to be a good neighbor or friend to those who rely on us. This viewpoint aligns mostly with the *personally responsible* conception of citizenship,<sup>42</sup> which is more consistent with the principles of character education than citizenship education. Even though a majority of the professors revealed that they felt it was important for preservice teachers to integrate values within citizenship education, only two professors discussed specific civics values, such as, public and common good, equal opportunity, diversity, and patriotism. Rather, many of the professors discussed that character education values like understanding right from wrong should be taught in the elementary curriculum. One professor emphasized teaching the moral characteristics of respect, responsibility, caring, and kindness. She stated:

It's those types of words that we need to teach others...so that they can make good citizens.

Another professor responded:

I think for elementary students...we put a big push on character education - being a good citizen in whatever surroundings you're in. For our little ones it may mean here at school or at home or when you go out into the town.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 241.

The final professor's comments also highlighted character, but were broader when discussing citizenship education. She emphasized the following:

Citizenship education is teaching children to be good citizens, to appreciate their freedoms, and not to take anything for granted. Citizenship encompasses everything in our world: getting along with others, which is diversity, multiculturalism. Citizenship is being proud of your history and knowing others' histories or being aware...Citizenship is the world in motion. It's our country in motion. But in order to be a good citizen, you have to respect yourself, you have to learn to respect others, and you can differ, but learn to respect, learn how to disagree in an amicable manner. It's just being a good citizen: being respectful of others, being respectful of self.

In contrast to the majority of the professors' views that centered on character education values, two professors discussed a different set of values that are important for students to understand when learning about citizenship. One professor specifically discussed American values that were highlighted in the textbook that she used in her course. She stated:

They talk about...American values...It's mostly based on the democratic values that our country was founded on: honesty, respect for all, responsibility; those types of things. They call them the virtues, the fundamental values of American democracy: public and common good, equal opportunity, diversity, truth, patriotism, and the rights to life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness.

The second professor mentioned the importance of understanding diversity, by first understanding the value of human life and the value in being an informed decision-maker. She commented:

With the diversity aspect, we really try to focus on breaking down cultural barriers and making sure that none of their students are ever put in a position where they feel degraded or different or [encounter] a knock to their self-esteem because they are from a different country or they have a different belief system, and so I think that the number one thing that we try to teach when it comes to that is that all human beings matter and that all human life is valuable. And that's what we hope our preservice teachers are instilling in their students.

**Skills.** When professors were asked about the citizenship skills that elementary students need, responses included being an active participant in society and following the rules in the classroom. The main skill that professors felt preservice teachers should emphasize with elementary students was voting. One professor stated:

Voting. I'm big on voting, because, really, you can't complain if you don't vote and when you vote that means that you care about your country, you care about your community.

Another professor mentioned how they discussed voting as an important citizenship skill since the school year included a major political election, while an additional professor felt that students should learn how to vote because it is a responsibility and a right that we have as Americans.

Many of the professors emphasized the importance of preservice teachers' understanding that citizenship education should include active participation in the government or the democratic process. One professor explained:

Well, I think the overall goal is to make sure we do our part to produce good citizens for America - citizens who understand right from wrong, [who] are able to participate in society, [are] educated voters, but also get involved in their communities to make a difference.

One professor mentioned that both the textbook that she uses in her course as well as the state standards really emphasize that citizenship is more about being informed and involved so that you can make good decisions. Another professor discussed that citizenship is beginning to participate at whatever level you are capable. This professor discussed the importance of preservice teachers talking about voting with elementary students, especially during an election year.

Additionally, one professor discussed how their department had switched the department's definition of "citizenship" to "engaged citizenship," which is more about teaching students how to participate in caring for the welfare of others and caring for the welfare of their community. She discussed how the entire department really wanted to focus on teaching preservice teachers how to develop elementary students' personal connections to social studies and being able to explain why active participation is so important. She explained:

We don't necessarily focus on, "Oh, you have to vote," or "You have to pay your taxes on time."... We incorporate that in our education, but really we focused our definition of citizenship education and what we are teaching them to be more on how do we actively participate in our communities, and then how do we care for the welfare of others? So, I know a lot of our lesson plans, a lot of the things that we teach them is, "How do we teach our students to care for the environment?" "How do we teach our students to be kind to people?"...[It] has a more active overtone to it as opposed to just learning about history and the facts, making this personal connection so that they can see why it's important.

One perspective that was only mentioned by one professor concerning active participation was the motivation behind participating. She stated that at the very basic level:

It's partly falling in love with your country. I remember when I taught first grade that was one of my big things. I wanted them to look at the Statue of Liberty and think, "That's for me. That's my Statue of Liberty, and it's my flag." So first of all, just building some emotion towards your country and feeling good about being a citizen of your country.

When students entered the "older" elementary grades, she felt that was the time when they should begin to understand the responsibility that comes from being a member of a free society, including the responsibility to vote. She discussed how statistics have shown that many people in the United States are not taking advantage of the privilege of voting. Therefore, students need to be taught how to vote in the elementary classroom, including classroom elections. "And I think that's part of growing up and taking your part in building our country and all it can be."

One professor illustrated how preservice teachers could promote active participation by instructing them in how to build a community in the classroom.

It allows students to participate and understand democratic procedures. Creating a classroom community becomes a natural part of the classroom environment, facilitating decision-making, problem solving, and democratic citizenship.

### **Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Citizenship and Citizenship Education**

Before discussing the meaning and value of citizenship education with preservice teachers, I felt that it was important to explore the preservice teachers' personal views of what it means to be a citizen. All of the preservice teachers' views on citizenship corresponded with all three conceptions of the "good citizen", including the *participatory*, the *personally responsible*, and the *justice-oriented citizen*.<sup>43</sup> Although citizenship was mentioned as a valuable aspect of social studies by preservice teachers during the interview; only three used the term "citizen" or "citizenship" within their responses. Other comments were based on aspects related to citizenship, such as governmental roles and being an active contributor to society. One preservice teacher explained the importance of being a *participatory citizen*:

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 237-269.

I think it means you're an active participant in society. I think that being a citizen means that you take on the responsibility of making your community, your state, your neighborhood, whatever it is, a better place because you understand the laws, you understand the operations of government, and things like that.

Another stated:

[A citizen is] someone who is active in society, in voting, in the economy, in the workforce.

Several preservice teachers focused on the importance of being *personally responsible* citizens. One posited:

It means to...follow the rules, follow the laws of the land, show respect for your country and just work hard on being a great representative of the country that you live in.

Two preservice teachers discussed the concept of being a *justice-oriented citizen*. One preservice teacher explained:

To be a citizen is to understand that you are part of a team and that the greater good sometimes needs to or will outweigh the good of the individual. It is not a simple "majority rules." It is taking into account those who are in the minority and what their needs may be as well. It is looking out for those who cannot take care of themselves for whatever reason it is. It is also holding accountable those who can take care of themselves but are choosing not to and trying to bring them along where they become a productive part of the team as well...It is not [just] living for yourself and not paying attention to anybody else...

Another preservice teacher commented:

Well, one of the things we talked about actually a lot in our methods class is just making a more knowledgeable citizen and creating students that are going to be contributors to their society...

As the preservice teachers in this study discussed their perceptions of citizenship education and their intentions of teaching it within their classrooms, many of the preservice teachers felt that elementary students should be taught content related to democratic values and traditions and that intelligent participation in society is the primary characteristic of the good citizen. Two preservice teachers mentioned using specific curriculum with elementary students, including historical documents and academic principles. One preservice teacher discussed the importance of:



...knowing the key documents, like the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and just know[ing] why certain things were established in America, and I think you need to support it – like support your beliefs and state them. Because there [are] a lot of people that look badly upon the United States and as a good citizen, I think you need to know just how to defend it and like love your country.

The second preservice teacher stated that part of citizenship education is understanding historically why America is the way it is, including the principles on which America was founded, as well as the historical events. The preservice teacher stated:

...I think a lot of citizenship goes with knowing about our country. Like if you don't know about it, how can you have pride in it? It would be learning about past presidents, important documents. They'd learn about...the Bill of Rights...about voting for sure, and how the economy is run. I think there's a lot of things that can be factored into citizenship.

Similar to the professors' responses, seven preservice teachers (78%) discussed how citizenship education should include instruction on the importance of active participation in government both locally and nationally, as well as participation in the democratic process using decision-making skills. One preservice teacher discussed how important it was to teach elementary students about democracy and how it works. He thought it was important for students to be able to practice the democratic process within the classroom so that they would begin to see its value. This would lead to instruction and practice in critical thinking and problem solving skills for students, including student analysis of current problems with democratic governing and a "good way of governing." He also found that it was necessary for students to have:

...a belief in taking time and interest in the political process in the United States [and] that there is value in watching the political processes around the world and seeing how that affects us and how we may be running into issues or problems with other countries [and how to] possibly move towards peaceful resolution of situations.

One preservice teacher stated how elementary students would initially be introduced to the democratic process:

...talking about them being part of the United States, especially as each election comes up, local, and state, and federal, discussing the elements of democracy, the elements of citizenship, and what being a part of a democracy's average citizen means, specifically through voting and what that means overall to them as they grow and become working adults.

Two of the preservice teachers indicated that citizenship instruction should incorporate active participation in the democratic process. One stated:

I think that citizenship instruction would be basically teaching the students, I think, about being a good citizen, about community service, about serving the community, about being an informed citizen, and being involved in their government and being able to vote, and that if there's something that they don't like that they can do something to change it.

Another preservice teacher felt that being an active citizen and understanding their government can lead to improving the community.

A student would need to know about community, about jobs, wants, need, about our government, how it's run, who's involved in it, how they as a student, can be involved, how to get involved...

**Citizenship Education in the Elementary Classroom.** When preservice teachers were asked specifically what citizenship instruction might look like in an elementary classroom, several themes emerged. They, like many teachers currently in the field, were concerned about NCLB and the increasing emphasis on reading and math over social studies. Many felt that it was important to include social studies instructional time within their classroom, but were worried about finding time in the school day to incorporate the social studies activities that they would like to do. Therefore, many of the preservice teachers discussed incorporating citizenship through character education and classroom management, including the implementation of classroom jobs, rules, or their overall classroom management techniques.

Many of the preservice teachers (78%) felt that citizenship education would include some aspect of what has been more recently characterized as character education, including social interactions, treating another person with respect, and teaching students how to interact with one another.<sup>44</sup> A few also mentioned specific character traits or values that elementary students should learn as a part of citizenship education, including respect, helpfulness, and responsibility. One preservice specifically explained that citizenship education should include:

Teaching kids how to get along with each other within a classroom.

Another felt that character education should be a part of citizenship education.

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<sup>44</sup> Hoge, "Character Education," 104.

Ideally, I think if children all learn to value respecting each other and taking care of the place that they live in, that's all part of being a good citizen.

One preservice teacher discussed how teaching elementary students about being a good citizen does not happen by giving them a handout. Rather, students learn citizenship through interaction on the playground at recess when they are having disputes. She discussed an incident on the playground where students were playing tetherball, and some of the children voted another child out of the game so that the child was not allowed to play anymore. However, the student did not want to leave the tetherball court. She explained the importance of using this as a teachable moment:

So, having a conversation right then and there [discussing why] you were voted out because you did something wrong – that means that you need to leave. It's your responsibility to leave. I think that's something that kids need to experience...I just think that they need to know things like cooperation and team work, and good relationships with other people is the most important.

Five of the nine (56%) preservice teachers felt that they would incorporate citizenship instruction into their elementary classroom through the incorporation of classroom jobs, rules, and their overall management. One preservice teacher addressed citizenship and community.

She stated:

I think really trying to create a community in your classroom and an environment that is welcoming and that [is] a good community for the students to be a part of. I think that's a huge part of just social studies education.

Another preservice teacher talked about how developing a classroom community was important for the inclusion of citizenship concepts. She stated:

I think of government...having the students involved in having jobs in the classroom, or allowing them to make choices and coming up with their own ideas would be a way to implement citizenship in the classroom.

Three other preservice teachers discussed how the classroom environment and classroom rules would incorporate citizenship instruction. One preservice teacher said:

I think a lot can happen just by the way a classroom operates – the values that are taught in respecting every member of the class, working together, having some type of system of taking responsibility of different aspects of keeping the classroom clean or keeping this organized. I think those are all early lessons that

students can learn that can be translated later into life in the community and life in society.

Another preservice teacher commented:

Citizenship instruction, except for the most basic of classroom management issues... would probably include letting the students help decide what the classroom rules will be, certainly with the teacher's guidance on some of those rules, but understanding that most kids understand what's fair and what's right...especially after kindergarten year – letting them help with that process, letting them know that the rules are something that they are choosing and that they will be held accountable to them because they are their rules and not just something [that] is being told they have to follow, which, in our country, is pretty much the same way...If we don't like a particular rule or law, we have the ability to do something about it. It doesn't mean that it will always change, but we can certainly voice our opinion and take steps to try and get it to change. So that's a big part of what it [citizenship instruction] would be.

As evidenced by their responses, a majority of the preservice teachers thought that citizenship instruction in the elementary grades would be implemented in their future classroom through the classroom environment, including the use of classroom management strategies, including character education development, or classroom rules and jobs.

### **Elementary Social Studies Methods Course: Citizenship Education Instructional Strategies**

Preservice teachers and professors were asked to reflect on any citizenship coursework or activities that were assigned or presented in their elementary social studies methods courses. There was agreement between preservice teachers and professors about course activities that helped develop understanding of citizenship, as well as provide ideas about instructional strategies for teaching citizenship at the elementary level.

**Textbook.** Both professors and preservice teachers mentioned the textbook as a means to teach citizenship. However, only one preservice teacher discussed being positively impacted by using the textbook. The other preservice teachers only mentioned general characteristics from the textbooks that they felt exemplified citizenship, such as seeing pictures in the textbook of students saying the Pledge of Allegiance; while, professors indicated that they used the textbook in order to facilitate citizenship discussions or to highlight teaching examples. However, no preservice teachers mentioned any of these types of professor-led activities.

**Class Discussion.** Class discussion was a teaching strategy that both preservice teachers and professors highlighted when discussing how citizenship education was taught in the course. A few professors, who stated that they spent time discussing citizenship with their preservice teachers, addressed citizenship mainly from the perspective of classroom management techniques to discipline students, establish classroom rules, and promote certain values and beliefs. Several professors also discussed using cooperative groups in order to teach citizenship.

Most of the preservice teachers felt that the discussion about citizenship education really varied, with most of the discussion centering on character education not specific citizenship education principles and that the class discussion led by the professors produced little learning on citizenship education. One preservice teacher recalled a discussion on citizenship education that focused on character:

We did discuss some on the character development. The school that I'm going to is a Christian school, so I kind of am a little more careful with saying that specifically...We did discuss character development, character values, the issue of needing to teach values even apart from Christianity itself, needing to teach values and that there [are] specific values that are beneficial, that everyone would agree is beneficial to the individual and the group as a whole.

Although preservice teachers shared that professors used class discussion as a main way of teaching citizenship education, six out of nine (67%) stated that they did not feel that they spent enough time on citizenship or that they really learned a lot about it. One preservice teacher clarified the lack of time spent on discussing citizenship:

We actually only had about a week on it, or like 3 days talking about [it]...I don't think we actually spent enough time on it given how important it is to America as a whole, which was one thing that we talked about – America's overall consensus is the most important thing we need to do for our students is teach them how to be good citizens – and I don't think we touch on that enough in our methods class.

Another preservice teacher echoed the first preservice teacher by saying:

I don't know that we learned a whole lot about citizenship education.

Finally, one preservice teacher commented on learning more about character education saying:

You know that wasn't something that we covered too heavily. We covered more of character education than citizenship education.

**Resources.** The third citizenship teaching activity that was mentioned by professors and preservice teachers was the sharing of resources addressing citizenship. Even though there is a proliferation of alternative instructional materials to teach citizenship, including children's literature and websites that are suitable for texts or bases for activities in social studies, few primary teachers have a clear enough understanding of social studies to make good use of these resources.<sup>45</sup> Results from this study showed that only a few of the preservice teachers mentioned receiving resources on teaching citizenship education, such as links to websites and handouts. One preservice teacher was very complementary of the resources that she received during her social studies methods course. She emphasized:

I mean, I thought it [social studies methods course] was just extremely helpful, especially [since] she gave us so many resources and showed us what it takes to be a good social studies teacher and how to integrate it and just different websites to look at...

Two of the professors who discussed the importance of sharing citizenship resources mentioned that their preservice teachers were actively engaged in finding citizenship resources on the Internet; while another professor discussed providing a specific handout that gave the ideas on how to teach citizenship in their elementary classroom.

**Lesson Plans, Units, and Projects.** The fourth teaching strategy mentioned by six professors (67%) was using lesson planning, units, and projects for preservice teacher assignments. One professor stated:

They have to create a lesson plan for each area of social studies: civics, geography, economics, and history, and within their civics lesson plan they have to integrate citizenship somewhere in that lesson plan. How would they do that in their class?

Another professor also discussed that preservice teachers were responsible for presenting mini-units within the course, including presentation topics on citizenship, history, geography, etc. Contrary to the professors' views on incorporating lesson planning, units, and projects, preservice teachers did not feel that a majority of their professors used these types of activities. However, a couple of preservice teachers discussed how they were given a choice whether to create a lesson or unit on citizenship.

A few professors and preservice teachers mentioned the inclusion and implementation of community service or service-learning projects. Three of the professors (33%) required

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<sup>45</sup> 54. Janet Alleman and Jere Brophy, "Is Curriculum Integration a Boon or a Threat to Social Studies?" In *Meeting the Standards: Social Studies Readings for K-6 Educators*, ed. Mary E. Hess and Margaret A. Laughlin (Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies, 1997), 305-308.

their preservice teachers to participate in some form of service project during their elementary social studies methods course. All three discussed the importance of incorporating it within their course. The professor, who required preservice teachers to participate in a service project that benefited the local community where the school was situated, elaborated on the impact of the project on her preservice teachers. She stated:

We do it on Fridays...and students have to implement a 50-minute project...We've gone to the nursing home...We gave the female residents manicures and then we played Skip-Bo and Uno and cards with the gentlemen there. We have cleaned up the golf course. We have helped get the swimming pool ready for the community...Oh, one year when they were doing the Habitat house here, one group worked on that for a day...I let the kids decide each year so it's different every semester. That's part of the whole citizenship [experience]: owning the project. So, I let them decide, but the only requirement is that it has to be in [Name of City where university/college is located]. The students surprisingly really like going to the nursing home. When we talk about it, they're not happy about it, but once they go they always come back and are pleased...The maintenance department [on campus] is always very complimentary, I usually get a phone call or an e-mail thanking us for helping pick up the campus, and the students that are in my class are amazed at how much trash the students on the campus are leaving around, and they become more aware and are [expressing that] out[side] of the classroom, "Hey, don't throw that down! You know this is our campus!" I think they...become advocates for taking better care of the campus because they've had to clean it up.

Professors who included service projects within their course requirements also talked about some of the benefits of including this within the elementary social studies methods instruction. Some of the benefits included making a difference in other people's lives, making the world a better place, becoming better advocates for their world, and providing them with experiences that they can implement in their future classrooms with their own elementary students.

Although most of the preservice teachers in this study did not participate in a service-learning project during their social studies methods course, those who did have the opportunity were greatly impacted by the inclusion of it within their coursework. They also indicated that they were more likely to incorporate service projects within their future elementary classrooms. Two preservice teachers discussed the impact that community service had on them personally and professionally. One service project was situated in the local community, while the other one was through the organization called Pennies for Peace, an international service-learning program. The preservice teacher who participated in the local project discussed how it positively impacted her by sharing the following:

Each group — we took a class day and as a class we went and did the community service projects...One day we went and picked up trash on campus around [City name], and then my group is...going to assisted living and we are painting the ladies' nails and playing games with them. So, that's kind of something that maybe we could do in our future classroom. And we all as a class decided to go ahead and do that together as well. It's been very positive. I think that all of us being students here in [City name], it was good to give back to the community that we live in. And I think it gave me some good ideas as far as like when we went to pick up trash, each group, we weighed our trash at the end and there was a prize for each group who...had the heaviest load of trash. Things like that. I mean, it was kind of fun because it gave me a different idea of just...going and picking up trash. It gave us... a purpose and there was something fun that you could implement with students.

When asked what was the most interesting or most important new insight that was gained from the elementary social studies methods course, the second preservice teacher discussed her service-learning experience:

Well, I think the one thing that I liked most was involving the community. For instance, my teacher used an organization called Pennies for Peace in her school and showed us how to use it in the classroom as well. So, just involving the community overall is just the thing that I really gained from...that class.

Despite the inclusion of service projects within the social studies elementary methods course, only one preservice teacher really emphasized the importance of her future elementary students participating in service-learning. She discussed how a community service project would be the main strategy that she would use in order to teach citizenship in addition to voting or learning about the government. She said:

I think it would be important to do community service projects...One of the lessons that I worked on for the class, I planned that...each group of students would pick a community issue, an issue that they think is a problem or how to make that better. So, it gets them involved in their community and trying to change things.

Those preservice teachers who participated in a service-learning project did express having positive experiences, including increasing their self-knowledge, their self-efficacy, knowledge about serving, personal connections with the children, adults, or community they served, as well as having fun or other good feelings about participating in service.

## **Discussion**



Based on interview data, it appears that many preservice teachers and professors consider citizenship education instruction to be important in the elementary classroom. The following discusses the key findings found from this study, including participants' beliefs regarding the relationship between citizenship education and character education, as well as the impact of the instructional strategies that were used to teach citizenship.

For many of the preservice teachers and professors, there was a logical and functional relationship that existed among character education, citizenship education, and social studies. Professors revealed that they felt it was important for preservice teachers to integrate values within citizenship education. However, only two professors discussed specific civics values, such as, public and common good, equal opportunity, diversity, truth and patriotism. Many of the professors discussed the integration of character education values within the elementary curriculum by incorporating character education and classroom management techniques. If the role of social studies teachers is to develop civic virtues and dispositions within students, then taking an approach of only implementing character education and classroom management techniques presents a scenario where the social studies teacher is not fulfilling their role. Although elementary learners do need to become responsible, participating citizens, this does not occur automatically or simply through the incorporation of character education or classroom management techniques. Still, only implementing character education and classroom management techniques in the elementary classroom, not only diminishes the effectiveness of character education but also the effectiveness of citizenship education. Rather, preservice teachers need sufficient content knowledge in the core disciplines and the processes of social studies. They also need skills in using a variety of teaching and assessment strategies. Many of the preservice teachers and professors mentioned the importance of providing and utilizing various resources in order to teach citizenship. These skills need to extend in their abilities to locate, evaluate, and use developmentally appropriate resources that would build upon the skills and knowledge needed to fulfill the role of citizen.<sup>46</sup>

When considering the citizenship content that was discussed in this study, many of the preservice teachers could not provide specific examples of citizenship education or instructional strategies that should be used with their future students. Therefore, preservice teachers should be taught how to model the fundamental democratic principles in their classroom, as well as discuss them as they relate to curriculum content and current events. This should include social and civic participation skills that prepare elementary students to work effectively in diverse groups to problem-solve, discuss alternative strategies, make decisions, and take action, including actively participating in

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<sup>46</sup> National Council for the Social Studies, "Powerful and Purposeful Teaching and Learning in Elementary School Social Studies," *Social Studies and the Young Learner* 22 (2009), 31.

civic affairs.<sup>47</sup> They should learn how to make the fundamental democratic principles integral to the school's daily operations which prepare students to connect knowledge with beliefs and action. Furthermore, citizenship instructional content must include learning about government, political history, and political literacy.<sup>48</sup> Finally, citizenship education strategies should include such things as direct instruction on government, law, and politics; issues based discussion; mock trials; and field trips.<sup>49</sup> This learning transcends the simplistic 'character virtues' approach to values education in elementary schools."<sup>50</sup>

As indicated by the study, preservice teachers who participated in a service-learning project during their elementary social studies methods course expressed the value of this experience to their own knowledge and understanding of citizenship, as well as emphasized the importance of these types of experiences for their future elementary students. Elementary social studies professors should consider implementing service programs during their course to provide preservice teachers the opportunity to design and participate in authentic service-learning experiences. Those preservice teachers who were trained in service-learning as part of a teacher education program may be likely to increase the perceived value of service-learning in their future elementary classrooms, which may reinforce the participatory conception of citizenship. These service-learning projects should truly contribute to the community, and professors should give students a role in choosing and designing their projects that promote mutually respectful relationships and provide students with opportunities to reflect on their service work and learning skills.<sup>51</sup> Service-learning experiences need to be linked to what preservice teachers are learning through their formal classroom instruction, are meaningful to the preservice teachers, and advance the public good. Only by becoming familiar with service-learning through authentic participation, will preservice teachers be able to design service-learning experiences that expand their future students' conceptual understanding of democratic participation. Wade stated, "Teacher expertise in designing high quality service-learning experiences, including both knowledge of the elements of quality service-learning and the number of years implementing service-learning in the classroom, is a key factor in promoting positive student outcomes. Thus training, in service-learning as part of a teacher education program may be likely to increase the effectiveness of service-learning in K-12 classrooms."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Linda S. Levstik and Cynthia A. Tyson. *Handbook of Research in Social Studies Education*. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1.

<sup>48</sup> Althof and Berkowitz, "Moral Education," 509.

<sup>49</sup> Hoge, "Character Education," 106.

<sup>50</sup> 59. NCSS, "Powerful and Purposeful Teaching," 32.

<sup>51</sup> R. Dale Safrit and Allen W. Auck, "Volunteerism, Community Service, and Service-Learning by Ohio 4-H'er's in Grades 4-12," *Journal of Extension* (2003): <http://www.joe.org/joe/2003august/rb6.php>.

<sup>52</sup> Rahima C. Wade, "Service-Learning," in *Handbook of Research in Social Studies Education*, ed. Linda S. Levstik and Cynthia A. Tyson (New York: Routledge, 2008), 117.

## Conclusion

Exploring the questions from this study is useful for preservice elementary social studies methods professors and others who help prepare preservice teachers for future practice because this study showed that there were some differences between what the preservice teachers understood about citizenship, its content, its values, and its skills, and what the professors taught during the elementary social studies methods course. Based on preservice teachers' responses, I think that it is important for professors to recognize the ways in which they are incorporating citizenship within their methods course. They need to be aware of the value they place on it, as well as the implications it has for preservice teachers' decisions about how and why they should teach citizenship within their own classrooms.

Citizenship education is rooted in the very foundation of American education, with parents and community members realizing the importance of developing "good" citizens for our Nation. Teacher preparation programs must help preservice teachers understand the democratic and civic mission of schools. With the continued marginalization of social studies within the elementary classroom and the intermittent focus on citizenship education within the elementary social studies methods course, citizenship education deserves continued study. Understanding preservice teachers' and professors' professional commitment to citizenship education is essential for the continued development of the knowledge, values, and skills needed to teach future students the importance of participating as an active citizen in American society.

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