Intercollegiate Collaboration: Connecting Social Studies Preservice Teachers at Two Universities

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Abstract

This qualitative case study explored the collaboration between students in two social studies methods courses at different universities. The authors used technology to connect preservice teachers from teacher education programs that differ in terms of geography, size, and type of university. Using archived data from the courses, the authors found that the intercollegiate collaboration enhanced the students' methods experience by expanding learning opportunities through communities of social studies practice. Specifically, students had overall positive perceptions of the value of the collaboration, learned new teaching strategies and educational technologies, and also learned from multiple social studies methods instructors. The implications of these findings for social studies methods instructors and students, particularly at small colleges/universities are discussed. The paper includes identification of obstacles to implementation and recommended future lines of research in using technology for intercollegiate collaboration in social studies teacher education.

Colleges and universities across the United States and the world have a rich record of working together to research significant problems like human health, global climate change, educational inequality, and poverty eradication (American Educational Research Association [AERA], 2010; Parekh, 2010). With the advent of new technologies, greater possibilities exist for cross-university collaboration in both research and teaching.

For the purpose of this research, our definition of intercollegiate collaboration includes students and faculty from different teacher preparation programs working together to achieve a shared goal (Staley & Meyers, 2002). Although researchers from different universities have collaborated to research pressing problems, significantly less emphasis has been placed on teacher educators from different institutions coming together to collaborate in their teaching (Bolick, Berson, Coutts, & Heinecke, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2008).

New technologies like Skype, podcasts/vodcasts, blogs, wikis, and Internet Talk Radio open up a host of opportunities for cross-university collaboration. Furthermore, students using these resources can immediately communicate with peers from geographically distant and culturally diverse institutions (Maguth & Hilburn, 2010). Across these divides, faculty and students can use technology to come together to communicate, collaborate, and participate in online learning communities.

The roots of the collaboration described in this paper trace to 2003 when we, the authors, began working together on course projects at Teachers College during our master's program. Although we later took positions at different universities, during a recent fall semester we both taught social studies methods. During a discussion on how to improve our courses we began to think through ways for our social studies teacher candidates to use technology across universities to share, reflect, and collaborate on the teaching and learning of the social studies. We agreed on a few key collaborative tasks that would benefit our students: video-recorded microteaching opportunities, digitally mediated student reflection, and a synchronous technology that would allow all students enrolled in our social studies methods courses to discuss issues central to the field. The findings from our collaboration, both positive and negative, are reported in this paper.

This paper describes our investigation into our intercollegiate collaboration and how it contributed to students' social studies methods experience. It is written in the spirit of Bolick et al.'s (2003) call for research studies that "are needed to further investigate the most effective applications of CMC (computer mediated communication) in social studies teacher education" (p. 541). This paper focuses on the collaboration itself and the benefits and obstacles arising from the collaboration. The following research question guided our case study: What did the intercollegiate collaboration between two social studies methods courses contribute to students' social studies methods experience?

Intercollegiate Collaboration in Practice

The collaboration included several components, each of which was facilitated by technology. First, we paired students across universities with designated partners. Students emailed letters of introduction each other and were also encouraged to communicate with their partners throughout the methods course and beyond to share resources, lesson plans, and advice. The second component was microteaching. Students each video-recorded themselves teaching for 5 to 7 minutes then uploaded their videos to YouTube with "unlisted" settings, which enabled their partners and instructors, but not the general public, to view the videos. After watching the video footage of their teaching and their partner's teaching, students were each asked to provide a one-page reflection on their own microteaching and a one-page peer review reflection on their partner's microteaching. Then, students emailed both reflections to their partners and to the methods instructors. The third and final component of the collaboration was a series of digitally mediated, real-time discussions among all members of both methods classes.

Conceptual Framework

We situated this study in Wenger's (1998) scholarship on communities of practice. Wenger's research concludes that learning is a social process that occurs through people's experiences and interactions with one another. Wenger asserted that individuals belong to multiple communities of practices (i.e., work, school, home, civic, and leisure), and these organizations help shape individual learning and behavior.

> Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor....In a nutshell: Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact (Wenger, 2006, What Are Communities of Practice section, para. 2)

Communities of practice include members either volunteering or being required to participate in a group. As long as members share a concern or passion for something they do with the group and use the experience to learn how to do it better through interacting with members of the group, then the group meets the requirements detailed by Wenger. Of course, members who self-select may have a more vested interest in the group and interact more productively.

We drew on Wenger's (1998) three characteristics of communities of practice. He argued that these characteristics are crucial in distinguishing a community of practice from other groups and communities:

1. The Domain: A community of practice is defined by a shared domain of interest, and a commitment by its members to this domain.
2. The Community: As members explore their interest in this domain, they also share information, participate in joint activities, and assist one another. Within this characteristic, participants build relationships that enable them to learn from one another.
3. The Practice: Members within a community of practice work together to become better practitioners. This includes members sharing stories, experiences, tools, resources, technologies, and strategies to improve their practice. Participation within this community provides members with the knowledge, skills, jargon, resources, technological expertise, and social capital to grow professionally and improve their practice within this domain.

Collaboration is critical to communities of practice. As Wenger argued, "A community of practice includes the formation of a group identity through member participation which provides the opportunity for collaboration and shared relations among members" (p. 56). In our courses we strove to design a project in which our students would become better social studies practitioners as a result of collaborating in a community of practice.

Literature Review

Social Studies Methods: Collaboration Across Universities

Collaboration amongst teachers, students, and community leaders has been an essential part of a field as interdisciplinary and focused on citizenship education as the social studies (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2010). Many social studies researchers have argued that fostering prosocial behaviors and interpersonal relationships, especially across racial, ethnic, linguistic, and economic differences by

affording students collaborative learning opportunities is at the center of social studies instruction (Lemming, 1985; Schul, 2011; Singer, 1993).

In addition to teaching social science and humanities content, social studies teachers are expected to equip students with social skills, habits, and dispositions that allow them to work productively as members of a group and as citizens in a multicultural democracy. To meet its charge in preparing informed and active citizens, the social studies aims to foster meaningful, constructive relationships amongst students and stakeholders (NCSS, 2010). To connect students to their peers and to their communities, teachers are often encouraged to use cooperative learning techniques and strategies that heighten student academic learning and promote prosocial behaviors (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2007; Schul, 2011). Helping students develop the skills, understandings, and attitudes necessary to collaborate effectively is an important goal in the social studies.

In addition to providing collaborative opportunities for their students, in-service and preservice teachers are increasingly being asked to collaborate and learn from one another. This collaboration includes the formation of learning communities and professional development schools where social studies methods instructors, preservice teacher candidates, and in-service social studies teachers work together to construct a supportive and meaningful learning environment and experience (Chan & Ming, 2006; Hargreaves, 2003). Merryfield and Chase (1998) found that social studies teachers involved in a learning community benefited from working with a diversity of people, ideas, and experiences. However, few studies have described ways in which social studies methods instructors from different universities have used technology to forge an intercollegiate learning community between their social studies methods teacher candidates (examples include Bolick et al., 2003; Good, O'Connor, Greene, & Luce, 2005).

Technology Integration in Social Studies Teacher Education

Research in social studies education indicates that most teacher educators lack the requisite knowledge and skills to integrate technology successfully in social studies methods courses (Aust, Newberry, O'Brien, & Thomas, 2005; Diem, 2002). This situation is problematic in a field predicated on fostering informed and active citizens in a global and technologically advanced world (NCSS, 2010).

However, some promising examples of social studies methods using technology to advance the collaboration goals of the social studies include using student-created digital documentaries in the teaching of history (Manfra & Hammond, 2010), the successful implementation of Web Quests (VanFossen, 2010), the use of podcasting to forge a global perspective (Maguth & Elliott, 2010), and using geospatial technologies in the social studies (Alibrandi, Milson, & Shin, 2010). Another innovative example is the use of compressed video to observe and reflect on teaching in preservice candidates' field experience (Knight, Pedersen, and Peter, 2004). Despite these innovations, Valdez, Reich, and Berson (2010) noted in their review, "Teachers' ability to effectively integrate technology in the social studies classroom was curtailed by an almost total absence of effective technology in preservice teacher training" (p. 305).

Often, when technology is integrated in social studies methods, little discussion of ways in which to use technology to advance the goals of the social studies takes place, as technology usually becomes the centerpiece of instruction (Beisser, 1999; Diem, 2002). Furthermore, social studies scholarship indicates a need for well-orchestrated research that investigates the influence of technology on preservice and student learning (Lee & Friedman, 2009). In this particular study, technology was seen as a means of fostering

collaboration between students enrolled in two geographically distant and different social studies methods courses.

A few research studies in social studies education describe the use of technology in social studies methods classes for cross-university collaboration. Good et al. (2005) brought undergraduate preservice elementary social studies candidates from two different universities together through videoconferencing and e-mail in their course. Although candidates from these two large research institutions collaborated on assignments, they did not have the opportunity to watch and reflect on each other's teaching. Riley and Stern (2001) reported a collaborative web-supported experience between social studies teacher candidates at James Madison University and Auburn University at Montgomery whereby candidates completed shared assignments.

Other instances of different universities using technology to foster collaboration during social studies methods have been reported (Mason & Berson, 2000; White, 2000). Each of the studies identified potential in using technology to foster collaboration in social studies. However, each of the authors also said that more research is needed in this area. As such, our study builds on the work and advice offered through the extant literature. For instance, we debriefed after each collaborative event, modeled collaboration for the students and were proactive in addressing technology glitches (as recommended by Good et al., 2005).

Methodology

We used a qualitative, case study design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1990) to describe and discuss our preservice social studies students' use of technology and their accompanying perceptions of its use for collaboration across universities. Since Strauss and Corbin (1990) advocated for qualitative research in those areas where little is known, and researchers agree little is known about the ways in which technology can be used to foster collaboration during the social studies methods experience (Bolick et al., 2003; Good et al., 2005), a qualitative study was most appropriate. In this study, we defined the two social studies methods courses with their respective students as the case under investigation.

Qualitative case study research design is a methodology that helps researchers study complex phenomena within particular contexts (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This methodology allows participants to "tell it like it is" from their vantage point so that researchers can better understand the participants' actions and attitudes (Stark & Torrance, 2006). As Merriam (1988) argued, "A case study approach is often the best methodology for addressing problems....in order to improve practice" (p. xiii). Since improving the practice of our methods students was the overarching goal of this collaboration, a qualitative case study was the most appropriate design.

According to Hatch (2002), qualitative research is concerned with understanding the meanings individuals construct to better understand their world. This paradigm is consistent with the constructivist perspective we adopted, which acknowledges that researchers and participants, through open and honest dialog, construct the reality that is under investigation (Mishler, 1986).

Research Settings

Small College is a predominantly undergraduate, liberal arts institution with 1,200 students located on a small rural campus 45 minutes outside Cleveland, Ohio, a large

industrial midwestern U.S. city. The Department of Education is founded on the premise that teacher candidates must be culturally responsive educators who set rigorous standards for student learning, who believe in the potential of all students to achieve high standards for learning, and who are committed to educational equity. To meet these expectations, the education department is committed to keeping social studies methods class sizes in the range of 7 to 15 teacher candidates, which include both middle childhood and secondary social studies methods students.

In the Adolescent Young Adult Integrated Social Studies Program (grades 7-12), the department had 17 teacher candidates admitted at the time of this study. It tends to graduate four to five each year. Due to the small size of the college, the department has only one general methods professor for the Adolescent Young Adult Integrated Social Studies licensure band for middle and high school. It has invested heavily in equipping all its classrooms with Smart Boards and audience response systems and in providing student and faculty technology workshops and professional development.

Large University is a public, research-intensive university with over 29,000 students located in an urban area commonly known as the Research Triangle in central North Carolina in the southeastern U.S. The department of education's conceptual framework is to prepare leaders in education for equity and excellence in a democratic society. The Master of Arts in Teaching program, in which the methods course is nested, is an 11-month program (August-June) for preservice teachers who have already obtained a bachelor's degree. Students are usually recent graduates, but often include professionals seeking a second career in education. The social studies methods course includes 12 to 22 students and is dedicated exclusively to secondary (grades 9-12) social studies education. Large University's College of Education has three social studies methods instructors.

Participants

In qualitative studies, researchers often work with small samples of participants who are studied intensely and in depth (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This study included 22 participants (Table 1). Since Small College only had 6 students enrolled in the methods course, each student at Small College was paired with two students at Large University. Random sampling is often inappropriate for qualitative studies (Marshall, 1996), and this was exploratory research, so we used our own teaching as an opportunity for study.

Although we had a prior relationship, each of us brought different experiences and skills to the project. Hilburn's research interests include teaching social studies to immigrant students, and Maguth's interests involve using technology to shape a global perspective. Besides our research interests, Hilburn had 7 years of teaching middle school social studies. All of Maguth's experience was at the high school level. Although students at each institution were pursuing a social studies license, students differed from one another in regard to educational level, licensure area, and state residency.

Overcoming Logistical Challenges

There were several logistical challenges to implementing the intercollegiate collaboration. The primary challenge was not geographic distance between schools, as we expected. Instead, the major challenge was that the courses met at different times for different durations. In order to overcome this challenge, most of the components were completed in an asynchronous manner. These components included videotaped microteaching (uploaded to YouTube) and written reflections of partners' microteaching.

Table 1
Small College and Large University Social Studies Teacher Candidate Participants

Student Characteristics	Small College	Large University
Educational Level		
Graduates	0	16
Undergraduates	6	n/a
Gender		
Male	2	7
Female	4	9
Licensure Area		
Middle School	4	n/a
Secondary	2	16
Ethnicity		
White	5	15
African American	0	0
Hispanic	1	1
State Residency		
Ohio	6	0
North Carolina	0	10
Other	0	6
Total Students	6	16

We wanted our students to learn from one another in real time, as well. In addition to our classes meeting at different times, we had other factors to consider: All of our students took full course loads and many also held part-time jobs. Asking students to spend large amounts of time in synchronous out-of-class activities seemed unreasonable. In order to respect their busy lives and also bring them together, we had students meet for two, 30-minute online sessions, which they agreed was not onerous. To facilitate this dialog, we identified and used technology called "Talkshoe" (www.talkshoe.com). Talkshoe is an Internet radio/podcasting site that uses a Java chat client in conjunction with a bridge to allow users to host or participate in live on-line talk radio shows. Participants could call into the show using telephones or participate via a chat function on a computer.

In the first online radio show, author Maguth mediated a student discussion broadly about the field of the social studies. Discussion questions in this show included the following:

- Why did you choose to teach social studies rather than another subject?
- Please describe a former social studies teacher and the influence they had on your career path and/or pedagogy.
- In what ways could you apply online radio shows in your own future classrooms?

In the second radio show, Hilburn mediated a discussion entitled "Controversial Issues in the Social Studies." Students engaged in a professional conversation about the challenges, opportunities, and methods of teaching controversial issues in the social studies classroom. Students answered questions such as the following:

- How do you define controversial issues?
- Does your teaching context influence which controversial issues you could or should broach?
- Do parents have veto power over the issues you teach?

After each component, we separately debriefed with our students the benefits, limitations, and ways to improve future collaborations.

Data Collection

Due to different research methods having potential weaknesses, Erickson (1986) advocated the use of more than one type of data. Denzin (1970) suggested that researchers should expect a greater degree of accuracy amongst the findings when combining different types of data through triangulation.

We collected six types of archived data: email, YouTube videos, online radio chat logs (text), podcasts of online radio shows (audio), notes of instructor debriefings with students and instructor-to-instructor debriefings, and other relevant course documents. The first data source was student email exchange. These emails included introductions and lesson plan reflections. We examined the 67 emails students copied to us. We also examined 22 YouTube videos, each of which was 5-10 minutes in duration.

The format of online radio shows allowed us to collect two forms of archived data. Because participants in the synchronous, online radio shows can contribute to the discussion by calling in to talk with the host or by using the chat option to hold parallel text-based conversations with other show participants, we collected podcasts as audio data and chat logs as text data. Specifically, the two chat logs resulted in 25 pages of single-spaced text, and the two podcasts were over 60 minutes in duration.

We also took thorough notes during the debriefing process: student-to-instructor and instructor-to-instructor. After each online radio show, each instructor debriefed with the students for about 10 minutes (40 minutes total). We also debriefed with one another after online radio shows for about 20 minutes each (40 minutes total) and took extensive notes at three stages: preplanning, after the microteaching videos were uploaded, and at the end of the formal collaboration.

We held many more conversations than the three listed here. However, the majority of our conversations were informal, and because we did not take notes of these informal conversations, we did not include them in the data analysis. Data also came from relevant course documents such as syllabi, course evaluations, handouts, and social studies program requirements at each university.

Analytic Process

The data analysis process involved a progressive focus whereby we worked to gather, sift through, review, and reflect on archived data (as recommended by Parlett & Hamilton, 1976). We moved through the four phases of data analysis outlined by Baptise

(2001): defining the analysis, classifying the data, making connections between the data, and conveying the data message(s). This process involved examining the data and organizing elements into general categories/open codes.

Throughout the data analysis, we looked for relationships and differences between data (as recommended by Strauss & Corbin, 1990), using a constant comparative method for analysis. This method involved an inductive method whereby theory evolved from data collected. We sought out relationships and discrepancies between data in order to code data. We independently conducted line-by-line coding for specific data sets: two reflections, two YouTube videos, and two pages of chat logs, as well as our notes from class debriefings. Line-by-line codes included perspective, historical analysis, student comprehension, building rapport, social space, positionality, engagement, teacher voice, teacher presence, praise, point of view, and adaptation. We then held phone conversations to reduce the number of codes to more conceptual levels and develop a codebook. Examples from our codebook include reflection, critique, community, external, and enhancement. After agreeing on 15 codes in the codebook, we each coded our respective students' data.

In the next stage, we exchanged coded data so that both authors analyzed all data. We again worked independently to challenge each other's coding schemes. We stayed in frequent phone contact during this process. Finally, we worked collaboratively over the phone, to move from the coded data to develop overall conceptual categories to represent the findings. After determining our overall categories to represent the findings, we scanned the data once more to seek examples of disconfirming evidence. By analyzing the coded data within and across cases, we sought to answer the question, "What, if anything, did the intercollegiate collaboration contribute to students' social studies methods experience?"

Findings

Data analysis points to the conclusion that intercollegiate collaboration enhanced the students' methods experience by expanding learning opportunities through communities of social studies practice. Three findings support this argument: overall positive student perceptions of the value of the collaboration, learning new teaching strategies and educational technologies, and learning from multiple social studies instructors' expertise.

Student Perceptions of the Value of the Collaboration

Students expressed overall positive perceptions of the value of the collaboration. The perceived value of the collaboration was evident in four areas. Students expressed enthusiasm for the collaboration, valued the credibility of feedback provided by their partners, engaged with new technologies, and viewed the collaboration as contributing positively to the methods experience.

Increased student enthusiasm was evident through the entirety of the collaboration. Introductory emails at the beginning of the project and the final debriefing and final course evaluations validated that student interest and enthusiasm for the collaboration did not wane. From a social cognitive view on motivation and learning, students who are excited about the task and see an inherent value in it are more inclined to engage in the learning environment (Bandura, 1991).

In the introductory emails, typical statements included the following:

- "I am really excited about working with you, because it is always nice to have extra resources and just someone to talk to who is going through the same thing."
- "I can't wait to get started on this project."
- "I think this will be a great experience for both of us," and, "I'm looking forward to working with you on our digital collaboration."

The majority of students also valued the specific technology aspects of the collaboration and instructor modeling of technologies. In particular, students valued using online radio shows to facilitate discussion and debate, important instructional methods in the social studies (according to Hess, 2009):

- "I loved the chat function of the online radio show - some well meaning, intense, and fiery debate - yeah!"
- "Thanks for making us do the Talkshoe thing. I am pretty resistant to new technologies, so I definitely would not have learned about this technology if not for this class."
- "I really enjoyed listening and responding during the radio shows....These assignments helped me better understand ways to integrate technology in social studies."

Additionally, 6 of the students said the feedback they received from their partners had more credibility than the feedback received from classmates. In the same way that publication feedback is perceived to be more credible through the external review process, these students highly valued the feedback provided by their external reviewer partner. Although the partners were introduced to one another and the feedback was not anonymous, the following quotations speak to students' perception that the collaboration with a student from another university allowed for more authentic feedback for two main reasons: The feedback was external to the cohort and it was private (rather than given in front of classmates):

> It's not like I knew this person or they really knew me... I felt like I could be supportive and honest with them. For instance, the one lesson [microteaching] I reviewed wasn't great and I was straight to the point with the student. I told them why it needed work.... In class, I wouldn't have been as candid and I think many of my classmates would have been defensive.

> I knew that the [Large University] student wouldn't care about hurting my feelings, especially since we were having a private conversation on my teaching....It's not like we were broadcasting each other's feedback to the entire class, which is what usually happens when we do micro-teachings in class. I really think her feedback improved my teaching.

Finally, when reflecting on the project in the final debriefing and in the end-of-course evaluations, students said that collaborating with students from another university enhanced the methods experience. At the end of the collaboration assignments, each instructor debriefed with students about their perceptions of the collaboration. When students were asked to raise their hands if the collaboration was a "worthwhile, meaningful assignment" that should be continued in future methods courses, all but two students raised their hands.

Furthermore, each instructor provided informal course evaluations at the end of the methods course. Among other questions, this end-of-course evaluation asked students to evaluate each course assignment. Representative comments specific to the collaboration

included the following: "I have learned a lot from this [collaboration] process overall," and "This [collaboration] has been a frustrating but worthwhile process." At least one student viewed the collaboration as on opportunity to gain leadership skills. This student stated that the collaboration "contributed to me becoming a teacher leader."

This finding is consistent with the first characteristic of communities of practice, Domain (Wenger, 2006). The students demonstrated a commitment to becoming more effective social studies practitioners. This commitment was evidenced by student enthusiasm for expanding their professional community and for learning from other preservice teachers. As such, this collaboration responded to the NCSS (2010) call for social studies instruction that fosters meaningful, constructive relationships amongst students and stakeholders.

To a lesser degree, this finding also addressed the Community characteristic. Participants communicated multiple times (introductory email, Internet talk radio shows, and reflection exchanges), although the duration of the community building was curtailed by the one-semester timeframe of the methods courses. Despite the limited duration of the collaboration, we were not entirely satisfied with how students adopted the Community characteristic. One of the stated goals of the collaboration was for students to participate in the expanded community of professionals beyond the assignments associated with this collaboration. Although students communicated regularly during the assignments, we have no evidence that students stayed in contact after the assignments were completed. The same could likely be true about students in any methods course.

New Teaching Strategies and Educational Technologies

Students gained lesson planning ideas from their partners in content and pedagogy. For example, when reviewing a partner's lesson plan and teaching, one student stated, "Evaluating Pearl Harbor from another perspective is great to analyze and move past our own nationalistic and hyperpatriotic interpretations of historic events." Another stated, "I really enjoyed it [the student's videotaped lesson plan] and might be asking you for tips on teaching the Progressive Era."

Students freely offered advice about how their partners could improve instruction. Typical statements included

- "Tell them what you will tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them."
- "Have your student write on the board, allowing you to circulate around the room to observe what students are writing and ensure everyone in staying on task."

Other students referred their partners to supplemental resources. The following quotes are illustrative:

> You said "good" after each student participates in class and I wonder if after a while that could end up sending the wrong message that merely speaking in class is what's expected....You should check out <u>Teach Like a Champion</u> by Doug Lemov. The author defends the importance of a high standard of correctness in your classroom.

> I just got done viewing your microteach on the American Revolution....Your Power Point has a lot of text and you may want to use more images. You should

check out some of the pictures at the national archives:
http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/revolution-images.

Students also used their expanded professional network to exchange ideas on ways to integrate technology in the social studies. In this emergent community of practice, students reflected on technologies used by their partners:

- "I really liked the involvement of the students on the SmartBoard 'Graffiti Wall' feature and would like to use this resource."
- "He provided his students with a number to dial on their phones to text their answers in, which showed up on the screen at the front of the room….The activity worked well."
- "The use of the text message answers was really neat. I had not seen that before and it gave the students a chance to use their cell phones productively."

In particular, students at Large University learned a great deal about technology from Small College students and the technological expertise of Maguth. Specifically, social studies students at Small College had greater access to Smart Boards and audience response system technologies and were more fluent in implementing these technologies. Students at Large University gained specific technology-integration lesson planning ideas. By watching their partners integrate technologies into their microteaching, students reflected on the benefits and limitations of the technologies.

Furthermore, students often expressed a future interest to integrate similar interactive technologies in order to promote student participation. Watching and reflecting on their partners' integration of technology allowed the students to learn from one another in an expanded community of social studies professionals. The need is growing to prepare preservice social studies teachers with the skills, knowledge, and understandings necessary to use technology meaningfully (Diem, 2002).

This finding addresses Wenger's (2006) Practice characteristic. Students actively sought and valued feedback from their partners in order to improve their practice. Furthermore, class debriefings and reflections indicated that students learned teaching skills from one another, such as using student note-takers, previewing/teaching/reviewing during teacher-led instructional segments, and also applying educational technologies such as Graffiti Walls and cell phone polling.

However, this finding did not adequately address the Domain characteristic as well as we would have liked. Specifically, one of our goals was to help students learn that social studies is a unique learning domain with specific goals which requires specific expertise. Although students discussed the importance of social studies in the Radio Shows, the feedback and suggestions reflected general pedagogical advice rather than social studies pedagogical content knowledge.

Learning from Multiple Instructors

Students, particularly those at Small College, expressed appreciation for learning from multiple social studies instructors. On Maguth's informal course evaluation, students said one of the highlights of this project was the affordance of communicating with and learning from an additional social studies faculty member. Furthermore, in four instances (two to each instructor), students went beyond the course assignments by e-mailing the other university's methods instructor seeking answers or advice about teaching social studies.

During an online radio show, students were asked to participate in a conversation on the field of the social studies. Students were asked to call in to ask questions and comment on why they wanted to teach social studies and challenges facing the field. This experience provided students an opportunity to talk to and interact with another expert in social studies education. For example, when a student from Large University asked Maguth during the first Internet talk show about the state of the social studies in Ohio, Maguth responded,

> In Ohio, much like many other states, the social studies is under attack. The state legislature has just suspended the elementary and middle school state assessment in social studies, and the golden rule in Ohio is if it isn't tested it's usually not taught.

These digitally mediated discussions allowed students to learn how social studies content differs between states and how different states value the social studies. In this expanded community of social studies professionals, students were able to reflect on opportunities and challenges facing specific states in delivering a strong social studies education to all students.

In the second Internet talk radio show, social studies methods students and the instructors discussed teaching controversial issues. Many students feel more comfortable discussing issues of racism, discrimination, homophobia, and other controversial issues online (according to Merryfield, 2006). In the second talk radio show, students also appreciated the controversial issues discussion:

Student at Small College:	There are some issues in Ohio that would be difficult to discuss in class. Like gay rights or abortion. I know that if I brought this up in the school I'm working at I would get kicked out. What should teachers do when they work in these sort of schools?
Hilburn:	Of course, all teachers should know their community and students and avoid imposing their views on anyone. Diana Hess has written a lot on this topic, and you should really check out some of her research. If there is a great deal of discomfort, sometimes the teacher can attempt to stay neutral and have the students discuss and debate these issues with one another. This takes the teacher out of the spotlight.

During the student debriefing after the first radio show, students noted how they enjoyed listening to and interacting with the methods instructor at the other institution. A student at Large University commented in the debriefing,

> I really liked the discussion with Dr. Maguth on the abuse of lecture and textbooks in the social studies. He really provided a lot of examples from his experiences in social studies classes....I think we need to have more of these radio shows.

This collaboration allowed students at both institutions the opportunity to interact with geographically distant students and faculty. Students at Small College not only benefited from listening to the experience and insights of students at a larger and more diverse

institution, but also had the opportunity to interact with another social studies instructor, as Maguth is the only social studies instructor at Small College. This finding also addresses Practice, the third of Wenger's (2006) characteristics of communities of practice.

Limitations

While overall this experience presented new possibilities for social studies methods preservice teachers using technology to collaborate, there were limitations. For instance, students were expected to gain an operational awareness of the technologies, especially the usage of Internet Talk Radio, outside of class. Student comments on course evaluations indicated that by the time they really understood the technology, the experience was nearing its end. We identified the need to better acclimate students to this technology in class. Additionally, we could have been more overt in making the collaboration specific to social studies methods.

The online talk radio shows were clearly specific to the field, but for the microteaching we did not encourage students to use unique social studies teaching methods, such as primary document analysis. Instead, students were free to use any method of their choice. The students mirrored our lack of focus on social studies pedagogy by providing feedback to one another that was more often general pedagogical advice than social studies pedagogical content knowledge.

Another limitation was that we neglected many collaborative opportunities. For example, each student had to turn in lesson plans throughout the semester. We could have incorporated partner peer review at each of these assignments. We could also have asked our students to compare and contrast state standard courses of study between our respective states.

There were also methodological limitations. We did not collect precollaboration data from prior methods courses, which made comparative analyses impossible. Finally, this case study was limited to one semester. A longitudinal study with the student participants going forward or a study on the same topic over several methods course, would likely result in richer data.

Implications

Methods Instructors at Small Colleges and Universities

The type of intercollegiate collaboration exemplified in this study would be of particular benefit to social studies methods preservice teachers and instructors at small colleges and universities for three main reasons: diversity, access to a greater number of faculty members, and satisfying National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and NCSS standards. At Small College, almost all field and clinical placements are conducted in rural schools. Most of these students know each other well, as they are usually enrolled in the same program courses and sections. Furthermore, the college has only one social studies faculty member.

This collaboration allowed the Small College students to interact with a greater number of social studies preservice teachers and encounter new perspectives. Also, the Small College students had the opportunity to communicate with and learn from another social studies faculty member. Since Large University is located in an urban area, the students

were able to discuss issues of teaching the social studies in settings and communities that differed from their experience.

Rural teacher education programs often face significant hurdles in meeting NCATE's expectations for diversity, due to their geography (Miretzky & Stevens, 2011). As Small College prepared for its NCATE onsite visit, we learned that this digitally mediated collaboration brought us closer to meeting two of NCATE's Standard 4 diversity provisions:

> 4b. What opportunities do candidates have to interact with higher education and/or school based faculty from diverse groups?

> 4c. What opportunities do candidates have to interact with candidates from diverse groups?

This call is further echoed in the *NCSS Program Standards for the Initial Preparation of Social Studies Teachers* (NCSS, 2004), under Pedagogical Standards (3.1), which regard social studies methods as a course that "prepares teacher candidates to use a variety of approaches to instruction that are appropriate to the nature of social studies content and goals and to use them in diverse settings and with students with diverse backgrounds, interests, and abilities."

Intercollegiate Social Studies Methods Communities of Practice

We framed this study using the three characteristics of Wenger's (1998) communities of practice. Of these characteristics, our collaboration most strongly supported the Practice characteristic, as our students shared resources, provided feedback, and learned practices of teaching social studies from one another. Based on the data we obtained, the students collectively learned a great deal from this collaboration and encouraged us to practice similar endeavors with future methods courses. To a lesser degree, this collaboration contributed to developing the Domain characteristic of communities of practice. Specifically, one of our goals was to help students have a sense of pride and belonging in the community of social studies professionals. We strove for our students to see social studies as a unique and critically important field with specific goals, taught by teachers with specific expertise. Evidence from the online talk shows and reflections demonstrated that we were marginally successful at doing so.

However, we were less satisfied with how the collaboration addressed the Community characteristic of communities of practice. We hoped this collaboration would build community amongst our students that would be leveraged in future methods assignments, provide networking opportunities for jobs, and encourage students to share resources on an ongoing basis. Unfortunately, we found little evidence that students continued to participate within the community beyond the end of this project (aside from the four students who contacted instructors). On the one hand, our ability to build community was constrained by the semester schedule. On the other hand, Wenger makes a clear call for regular and prolonged interaction amongst community members. Future intercollegiate collaborations aiming to develop lasting relationships must take Wenger's call into account by establishing communities of practice that are extended beyond a single semester.

Future Research

We have several suggestions for future research. First, we encourage methods instructors from different types of teacher education programs to engage in intercollegiate collaboration. Second, researchers should seek to confirm or broaden our findings by exploring intercollegiate collaboration through different methodologies. For example, a quantitative study could evaluate the student perceptions of the effects of intercollegiate collaboration, using our findings as variables (e.g., perceived value of multiple instructors, exposure to different teaching strategies).

Another methodological approach is a discourse analysis that compares the ways in which students reflect on classmates' teaching and reflect on their partners' teaching. A final suggestion for future research is to conduct a long-term study to see if students continue to leverage the benefits of an expanded community of professionals after the methods course has ended. For example, in our study a student at Small College stayed in contact with Hilburn for several months in order to learn more about the teacher job market in a southern state. Was this an isolated incident or have students in our respective methods courses stayed in contact to continue to learn from one another?

Conclusion

This study is one of the first in social studies teacher education on the topic of intercollegiate collaboration in which the focus was student collaboration in a methods course, multiple forms of technologies were integrated, and the preservice teachers were from different types of universities. Our students were enthusiastic about an expanded community of practice from which to learn the craft of teaching social studies. Students had an overall positive perception of the intercollegiate collaboration. It exposed students to new teaching strategies and educational technologies and allowed them to learn from multiple social studies instructors. This collaboration contributed to the preparation of future social studies educators.   As such, we encourage other methods instructors to consider adding an intercollegiate collaboration component to their methods course.

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