Museum Visits in Social Studies: The Role of a Methods Course

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Museum visits provide opportunities for students to learn content in engaging and interactive ways. In social studies, museums may be spaces where students can increase their historical and civic understanding through exposure to artifacts and narratives unavailable in classrooms. Yet, research suggests teachers are insufficiently prepared to integrate museum visits into classroom curriculum effectively. In this project, the instructors of the two secondary social studies methods course sections organized a visit to a natural history museum. The instructors modeled pre- and post-visit lesson activities during class and provided a guide for pre-service teachers to complete during their museum visit. While pre-service teachers reported they better understood the importance of connecting museum visits to classroom curriculum, they also raised questions about how methods course faculty might introduce pre-service teachers to museum visits. This article discusses what was learned during the project, as well as approaches social studies methods course instructors might reflect upon when considering museum visits as a component of social studies teacher education.

Key Words: social studies, museums, teacher education, pre-service teachers, methods courses, teacher educator pedagogy

Introduction

As social studies teachers seek to integrate innovative pedagogy into their teaching, they may turn to museums as community-based resources providing an unique space for learning content (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Griffin & Symington, 1997; Marcus, 2007, 2008). Museums offer opportunities for students to actively make meaning through examination of objects and artifacts, social interaction, and exploration of museum content through personal choice (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Griffin, 2004; Griffin & Symington, 1997; Hooper-Greenhill, 1991). For social studies, particularly, museums provide a space where students can learn more about historical narratives and about their roles as citizens, leading to increased historical and civic understanding (Gregg & Leinhardt, 2002; Marcus, 2007, 2008; Marcus, Stoddard, & Woodward, 2012; Todd & Brinkman, 2008; Trofanenko, 2006a, 2010). Despite the perceived value of museum visits in education, research demonstrates many teachers are insufficiently prepared to integrate museum visits into their curriculum (Kisiel, 2003, 2006; Griffin, 2004; Griffin & Symington, 1997; Marcus, 2008). Teachers tend to implement traditional school-based pedagogy during museum visits and isolate the museum visit from classroom curriculum (Griffin, 2004; Griffin & Symington, 1997; Kisiel, 2003, 2006).

In this project, two secondary social studies methods course instructors organized a visit to the Water: H₂O = Life exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History, modeling pre-visit, during-visit, and post-visit activities. This article begins with a discussion of the relevant literature then introduces the project implemented in the two methods course sections. In addition, this article includes a discussion of what was learned during the project, as well as strategies for social studies methods course instructors to consider when seeking to teach pre-service teachers about museum visits.
Museums and Student Learning

Museums can provide a space for individuals and groups to make meaning through the process of interacting with narratives, artifacts, and visuals (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Hein, 1999; Hooper-Greenhill, 1991). Such learning is possible within multiple types of museums, including natural history, history, and art museums, although different types of museums have different purposes (Abu-Shumays & Leinhardt, 2002; Marcus, et al., 2012). Natural history museums, for example, aim to deliver content about, as well as provoke students’ personal interest in, the study of cultures, environments, and science (Abu-Shumays & Leinhardt, 2002; Tal & Morag, 2007; Tran, 2007). Natural history museums also provide students with the opportunity to make connections between the sciences and the social studies about issues such as sustainability. Exhibits at natural history museums, according to Tali Tal and Orly Morag (2007), are increasingly focused on “socioscientific issues” (p. 749), connecting science with society and civic life.

One strategy for meaning making that promotes students’ learning at museums involves providing students with choices and opportunities to discover and explore topics of interest to them during museum visits (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Griffin & Symington, 1997; Kisiel, 2003). Similarly, multiple types of museums offer students the opportunity to learn from objects and artifacts. Describing the process of examining objects for meaning as a skill “necessary for social life” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991, p. 109), Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (1991) notes how learning may take place as students make connections between objects and culture, society, and history. Providing an agenda for the museum visit also contributes to increased learning at museums (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Kisiel, 2003, 2006; Griffin, 2004; Griffin & Symington, 1997; Noel & Colopy, 2006). By engaging students’ prior knowledge about a topic and by providing students with an overview of what they will see and experience in the museum, students are better prepared to process the physical space (Falk & Dierking, 2000). The development of pre-visit, as well as post-visit, activities remains a key goal in educating teachers about how to effectively plan visits.

In the social studies, museums may facilitate historical and civic understanding. History museums, for example, may increase students’ historical understanding through the presentation of multiple perspectives and the opportunity to analyze historical evidence (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Marcus, 2008; Marcus, et al., 2012). In many cases, as Brenda Trofanenko (2006b) suggests, museum narratives are shaped by the “dominant worldview of society” (p. 106). As such, museums provide students with the opportunity to engage in historical inquiry by examining whose voices are and are not present in established museum narratives, analyzing the museum’s presentation of historical content (Marcus, et al., 2012; Trofanenko, 2006a, 2010). Students may participate, additionally, in service learning projects at local museums, including opportunities to design learning activities for children visiting museums, thereby connecting academic learning, responsibilities of citizenship, and community needs (Todd & Brinkman, 2008; Waite & Leavell, 2006). Researchers find that effective service learning supports students’ civic dispositions and skills, including social responsibility and civic participation (Kahne & Middaugh, 2010; Wade, 2008). Despite the resources museums may provide for students’ learning, teachers must negotiate specific constraints. Financial and time restrictions must be addressed, as teachers may struggle to locate spaces in the curriculum where visits to
museums are feasible. Administrative emphasis on standardized assessment may also preclude support for the time necessary to organize field trips to museums (Marcus, et al., 2012).

**Museums and Teacher Education**

Despite the opportunities for student learning in museums, many teachers seem unsure about how to incorporate museum visits into the curriculum (Kisiel, 2003, 2006; Griffin, 2004; Griffin & Symington, 1997; Marcus, 2008). Teachers lacking training relative to planning museum visits tend to construct worksheets emphasizing content retrieval and dependence upon written text, rather than facilitating learning that capitalizes on the unique environment of the museum (Kisiel, 2003). Studies also show that teachers do not typically provide connections to classroom curriculum or offer students choices to explore within a museum (Griffin, 2004; Griffin & Symington, 1997).

Case studies by Madeleine Gregg and Gaea Leinhardt, (2002), Reese Todd and Stephanie Gray Brinkman (2008), and Susan Waite and Judy Leavell (2006) contribute to the literature about conducting museum visits during social studies teacher education programs. In an examination of pre-service teachers’ learning experiences through museum visits, Gregg and Leinhardt investigated whether a field trip to the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute increased content knowledge about the civil rights movement. Prior to visiting the museum, the pre-service teachers developed concept webs about the civil rights movement, then revised those concept webs and participated in discussions following the visit. The researchers found the post-visit webs and discussions elicited greater understanding about central civil rights concepts. The case studies by Todd and Brinkman and Waite and Leavell demonstrated ways that teacher education programs can introduce pre-service teachers to museums by encouraging them to become involved with museum programs targeting children’s learning about social studies content. These studies found pre-service teachers learned about the value of service contributions to the community; developed knowledge and skills about social studies and instruction; and learned how to incorporate similar projects into their own classrooms. These findings reinforce Joseph Kahne and Ellen Middaugh’s (2010) identification of service learning as a “promising practice” (p. 144) in civic education. Other studies have also demonstrated that teachers recognize the potential learning outcomes resulting from museum visits. In their study of social studies teachers’ school group visits to local history museums, Andrea Noel and Mary Ann Colopy (2006) found both museum educators and teachers believed pre-visit preparation increased the value of the museum visit. In Chrystal Johnson and Chris McGrew’s (2011) study of collaborations between teachers and public history institutions in Indiana, the researchers found that despite testing pressures potentially minimizing social studies instruction in elementary classrooms, teachers seemed to understand the value visits to public history institutions add to the social studies curriculum. Because of the important role that museums can play in students’ learning, Alan Marcus (2008) suggests that additional research be conducted regarding how teachers are prepared to plan museum visits. The project reported here intended to meet that aim, by demonstrating how teacher educator modeling was used as a pedagogical approach to facilitate pre-service teachers’ understandings about how to integrate museum visits into the social studies curriculum.
Project Design

The Approach

This project took place in two sections of a secondary social studies methods course in a pre-service, social studies teacher education program in a large urban community in the eastern United States. The author was an instructor in the program and taught one section of the course. Another instructor in the program taught the second section of the methods course. The instructors used a style of modeling, defined by Joelle Jay (2002) as “‘teaching by example’” (p. 83), as a pedagogical strategy for introducing pre-service teachers to museum visits. Explicit modeling, according to John Loughran and Amanda Berry (2005), occurs when the instructor demonstrates the chosen pedagogical strategy and discusses the rationale for its use. The instructors hoped explicit modeling of the museum visit would encourage pre-service teachers to thoughtfully consider the rationale for and application of a museum visit.

Pre-service teachers were asked to participate in one visit to the Water: H$_2$O = Life exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History. As a natural history museum, the visit provided pre-service teachers with the opportunity to connect science and social studies and to consider responsibilities of citizenship in connection with sustainability (Noddings, 2005a; Tal & Morag, 2007). The exhibit also offered visitors access to content on text-based displays, while providing additional opportunities for personal meaning making and engagement through interactive displays and the close examination of artifacts (Abu-Shumays & Leinhardt, 2002; Falk & Dierking, 2000; Hooper-Greenhill, 1991). The central question for the museum visit was, how can we become better stewards of water? The instructors attempted to connect water stewardship to citizenship, as citizenship served as a central concept for the social studies methods course. The modeling took place over segments of three consecutive course sessions. Source material relied upon for the three-lesson study on water stewardship included: the American Museum of Natural History’s Educator’s Guide for the Water: H$_2$O = Life exhibit (AMNH, 2007), Robin Clarke and Jannet King’s (2004) The Water Atlas: A Unique Visual Analysis of the World’s Most Critical Resource, and Whose Water Is It? The Unquenchable Thirst of a Water-Hungry World, edited by Bernadette McDonald and Douglas Jehl (2003a).

The instructors began with a pre-visit lesson, introducing the concept of water stewardship and assigning relevant readings on water scarcity (Catley-Carlson, 2003; McDonald & Jehl, 2003b). During the second session, the pre-service teachers were asked to visit the museum independently, completing a worksheet structured to include different types of questions and experiences to promote meaning making. These questions addressed: basic content drawn from text displays; film, map, and artifact analysis; participation in interactives at the exhibit, such as virtual water quizzes; and application of content to daily life, including water conservation. The instructors designed the museum worksheet as an exemplar for pre-service teachers to consider when targeting students’ engagement and meaning making in a museum, supplementing content retrieval based on written text by drawing upon artifacts and innovative displays available at the exhibit (Hein, 1999; Hooper-Greenhill, 1991; Falk & Dierking, 2000; Kisiel, 2003). The approach concluded with a post-visit lesson conducted during a third course session. Throughout this process, the instructors discussed their thinking with the pre-service teachers, and, after modeling the lessons, made visible the decisions that were made and discussed them with the class. Pre-service teachers were given the opportunity to critique the lessons and museum worksheet itself.
**Data Collection and Analysis**

Nineteen pre-service teachers completed anonymous reflective responses and questionnaires that provided insight regarding their learning about museum visits. All respondents were graduate students enrolled in the social studies teacher education program. Nine of these participants elected to take part in follow-up interviews. The 30-minute interviews were conducted by the two instructors at the completion of the course, incorporating questions relating to the museum experience, the planning of museum visits, and the impact of teacher educator modeling. The author used traditional methods of qualitative data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The reflective responses, questionnaires and interview transcripts were read and coded. Using inductive analysis, the author looked for general themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

**Lessons Learned**

The pre-service teachers in this study identified several learning outcomes resulting from their participation in a visit to a natural history museum. Two themes of particular significance to social studies methods course faculty were identified, (1) the connections between content presented at a natural history museum and citizenship, and (2) the role of teacher educator modeling as a pedagogical strategy to use when teaching about museum visits.

**How can visits to natural history museums support understandings about citizenship?**

Researchers suggest museum visits facilitate subject matter learning as well as increased historical and civic understanding (Gregg & Leinhardt, 2002; Marcus, 2008; Marcus, et al., 2012; Todd & Brinkman, 2007; Waite & Leavell, 2006). Exposure to the Water: \( \text{H}_2\text{O} = \text{Life} \) exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History encouraged pre-service teachers to rethink how they use water and how their own water usage may be understood in a global context. The Water: \( \text{H}_2\text{O} = \text{Life} \) exhibit, as well as the corresponding pre-visit and post-visit lessons, brought global concerns about water usage and conservation to the participants’ attention and also gave them ideas about how they might become more responsible citizens as stewards of water. The following excerpts from pre-service teachers’ responses are provided: “It really got me thinking about how I use water, and in what ways I might waste it and how that might affect others, people who may not have as much water” (Excerpt 1).

[The project involved] finding information that really made you say ‘Oh, my gosh, I can’t believe that, like how much water it takes to [produce], you know whatever, however much amount of beef.’ It goes to the essential question of how can we be better stewards of water. Well, the first aspect of that was, pointing out that you might not think you use a lot of water, but look at the things that you do every day and the food that you eat and the activities that you participate in and you really don’t conserve water at all, like look at how much you’re using daily. So it really opens up your eyes that this is an important issue. So, I think I got a lot more out of it, just in terms of content, from the visit.

(Excerpt 2)

Other participants noted how the pre-visit lesson and the exhibit prompted more reflective thinking about water usage, saying, “I knew more about water going in having already listened [to], or, experienced a lesson on it, especially the big themes about how, how much water is used worldwide, how much is wasted” (Excerpt 3), and “I have to say that now when I brush my
teeth, I think about the water! I’ve never done that before, ever. When I think about watering my lawn, I’m thinking about the water” (Excerpt 4). These pre-service teachers’ responses point to how museum visits to similar exhibits might support civic education.

Conceptions of global citizenship draw attention to the importance of educating toward environmental sustainability (Noddings, 2005a, 2005b; Nolet, 2009). Arguing for increased attention to sustainability education in pre-service teacher education, Nolet (2009) writes that “global citizenship involves civic engagement and a commitment to equity on the world stage and may be associated with a concern for a number of issues such as peace, environmental justice, and economic equity” (pp. 425-6). While the pre-service teachers’ responses do not identify water stewardship as a specific civic responsibility, the pre-service teachers echo concerns relevant to global citizenship and environmental sustainability. Particularly because of their focus on content related to the environment, natural history museums provide an excellent opportunity for students to reflect on the interconnectedness of citizenship and sustainability. How might teacher educator modeling impact pre-service teachers’ thinking about museum visits?

This project examined how teacher educator modeling of a museum visit, including pre-visit, during-visit, and post-visit activities, influenced pre-service teachers’ learning about museum visits. Two themes emerged: (1) teaching curriculum design, and (2) constraining discovery.

Teaching curriculum design. Developing museum visits with purpose and structure, while including opportunities for student choice and exploration, maximizes students’ learning at museums (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Griffin & Symington, 1997; Kisiel, 2003, 2006). The methods course instructors modeled a pre-visit lesson; provided a worksheet to complete during the visit to the American Museum of Natural History; and engaged students in a post-visit debriefing. Following the course, several participants remarked they better understood the importance of establishing purpose for the museum visit, a purpose that connects the pre-visit lesson through to the post-visit lesson. They noted how the pre-visit lesson provided background and context for the museum exhibit, and how the post-visit lesson created opportunities for reflection and closure. The responses of the participants reflect the significance of setting an agenda, connecting to the curriculum, and reflecting upon a museum visit (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Griffin, 2004). Excerpts from pre-service teachers’ responses follow: “But, with this format, of really doing a before and after, and like a guide that’s during, I think that you get so much out of it” (Excerpt 1).

Well, I think that [it just] gave me the sense [that] you don’t just go to the museum to go to the museum. That you really have to structure it so that the students understand how it fits into the curriculum otherwise it will just be like, okay, fieldtrip day! And they won’t get anything out of it and they won’t pay as much attention. But if you explain and they can see how it fits into the curriculum, then it’s really, it really does enhance whatever you’re doing. (Excerpt 2)

I know whenever I’m going to be taking classes to museums, I would teach it that way, because I think that, if you just go to a museum and you don’t prime the kids and then you don’t, like, follow-up afterwards to have them process it, then it’s just, I just don’t think there’s any point. I think that, especially students who get too focused on the fun
time they had with their friend at the museum, . . . they would probably lose the bigger picture, if you don’t somehow incorporate the lesson in the classroom around the visit.

(Excerpt 3)

This modeling approach appeared to have the most impact in regard to encouraging the pre-service teachers to thoughtfully consider their purpose for the museum visit and how the visit connected to the classroom curriculum through pre-visit and post-visit activities (Griffin, 2004; Griffin & Symington, 1997). The pre-service teachers also expressed appreciation for the process of learning in a museum, particularly as it related to tasks prompted on the museum worksheet: manipulating objects and artifacts and engaging with interactive displays. Such tasks can be integrated into museum visits to both natural history and history museums, depending on the content objectives as connected to the classroom curriculum.

**Constraining discovery.** Although many of the participants noted the experience provided a model for how they might approach museum visits in the future, some also reflected on the pedagogical challenges of integrating museum visits. The methods course instructors in this case attempted to model a meaningful museum experience for students, emphasizing purpose, curriculum design, prompts targeting artifact analysis and interactive experiences, and considerations about citizenship. In retrospect, the instructors still relied on a traditional approach to the museum experience, namely the museum worksheet, with several questions to answer and specific directions to follow. While some pre-service teachers noted the benefits of this approach, others questioned it. Some pre-service teachers were concerned about the length of the museum worksheet, describing it as a barrier to effective learning. Some of the pre-service teachers felt the museum worksheet tended to emphasize information retrieval rather than higher-order thinking (Griffin & Symington, 1997; Kisiel, 2003). Excerpts from pre-service teachers’ responses follow.

By using the museum guide in the water exhibit, I realized how long it takes to complete the museum guides and that you also don’t want to make them too long, because you don’t, you also don’t want to take away from the experience, because I think if you make, if you put thirty questions and they’re all short answer or essay questions, . . . you could burn out the kids. I think they could get to the end of it and think that this was just a big chore for them, and it wasn’t fun. (Excerpt 1)

It was a little bit kind of scary to do, because I was thinking I don’t know how I would create one of these on my own, and it seems like it would be just very difficult or time consuming. (Excerpt 2)

But I, I don't know, at times I feel like paying attention to that guide so much kind of robbed the entire museum experience of the ability to just go with whatever catches your interest, which, I don't know, can be a good thing and a bad thing, I am completely not 100% decided on that. . . . [The] problem of missing out on some of the exploratory sense of the museum I think was a little, I don't know, I really do think that's kind of a problem. (Excerpt 3)

The instructors here emphasized a structured approach, examining text and visuals, interacting with artifacts and displays, as well as developing pre-visit, during-visit, and post-visit activities. Multiple options for participants to explore within the exhibit were not provided, nor were pre-service teachers asked to critically examine the museum as a primary source or to evaluate the narratives presented at the museum (Marcus, 2008; Marcus, et al., 2012; Trofanenko, 2006a,
2010), including assumptions and biases presented therein. These responses demonstrate the challenges and limitations of teacher educator modeling as a pedagogy. Teacher educators must continually reflect on their own practice (Loughran & Berry, 2005; Lunenberg, Korthagen, & Swennen, 2007), in this case, considering strategies to improve the experience of a museum visit.

**Discussion**

What approaches might social studies methods course faculty consider when introducing pre-service teachers to museum visits? The following suggestions, most of which connect to the goals of civic education, discuss the type of museum that one might introduce to pre-service teachers, as well as instructional approaches one might choose to apply.

A main idea learned during the implementation of this project concerned the opportunities for civic education supported by visits to natural history museums. As addressed earlier, natural history museums emphasize content related to the natural world, as well as information connected to diverse cultural groups across multiple contexts (Abu-Shumays & Leinhardt, 2002; Cox-Petersen, Marsh, Kisiel, & Melber, 2003; Tal & Morag, 2007). Because of the emphasis on the environment, natural history museums provide opportunities to consider the responsibilities of citizenship. Discussion about sustainability issues such as water stewardship might support the education of global citizens who exhibit concern for their world through consideration of economic and environmental justice, intergenerational equity, and deliberation toward the common good (Noddings, 2005a; Nolet, 2009; Parker, 2003). The visit to the Water: H₂O = Life exhibit is just one example. In retrospect, pre-service teachers may have been asked to consider the following questions (Jehl, 2003): What is the world’s water crisis? Who bears responsibility in this crisis? What are our corresponding obligations as global citizens to address the crisis? Methods course instructors might take pre-service teachers on visits to natural history museums that hold exhibits on the local environment and sustainability, asking pre-service teachers to consider connections between citizenship, the environment, and sustainability.

A second approach involves asking pre-service teachers to examine the museum from a critical lens. Some of the above questions already point to a more critical line of inquiry. While the instructors attempted to engage students in learning at the museum by reading text and visuals and by interacting with artifacts and displays, an opportunity was missed to ask students to critically assess museum content and function (Marcus, 2008; Trofanenko, 2006a; Trofanenko, 2010). In the future, the author may adjust the visit to ask pre-service teachers to engage in more critical analysis. Natural history museums’ exhibits relating to local and diverse environments and cultural groups, for example, present an opportunity to critically evaluate the narratives presented at the museum (Trofanenko, 2006a). Pre-service teachers may question the purpose and provenance of the narratives and artifacts exhibited. Pre-service teachers may also engage in perspective recognition (Barton & Levstik, 2004), analyzing the perspectives of cultural groups’ stories presented in the museum. Adopting a critical lens during museum visits also may support civic education. Citing Keith Barton and Linda Levstik’s (2004) goals for preparing students as democratic citizens, Alan Marcus, Jeremy Stoddard, and Walter Woodward (2012) suggest that museum visits can be structured for “promoting reasoned judgment, promoting an expanded view of humanity, and deliberating over the common good” (p. 10). A critical approach, as described above, encourages and supports these goals.
Another approach social studies methods course instructors may consider is the approach adopted in this project, a pedagogical approach focusing on the modeling of curriculum design by a teacher educator. As noted in the findings, the pre-service teachers seemed to appreciate the modeling of the pre-visit, during-visit, and post-visit activities, noting that the approach was different from what they experienced in Kindergarten-12 classroom visits to museums. They emphasized also their learning regarding the importance of establishing a purpose for the museum visit, connecting the visit with class curriculum, and asking students to engage with artifacts and interactive displays at the museum. Responses to the use of the worksheet, however, prompted the author to reconsider future iterations. The worksheet, while intending to move beyond content retrieval and dependence on written text (Griffin & Symington, 1997; Kisiel, 2003), did seem to constrain pre-service teachers’ exploration of topics of interest to them. A revised guide to the museum visit, providing pre-service teachers with fewer questions and with additional choices (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Griffin & Symington, 1997; Kisiel, 2003), as well as asking them to critique the museum’s purpose (Trofanenko, 2010), would likely improve the museum experience.

A fourth approach to teaching pre-service teachers how to incorporate museum visits into their social studies curriculum involves service learning. In her literature review on intersections between service learning and social studies, Rahima Wade (2008) identifies curriculum integration and reflection as key characteristics differentiating service learning from community service. She also writes that participants act as “essential contributors to their communities” (p. 110).

As referenced earlier, Todd and Brinkman (2008) and Waite and Leavell’s (2006) case studies provide models on this approach. Pre-service teachers participating in Todd and Brinkman’s study, for example, wrote and taught lessons to Kindergarten-6 elementary school students at a local ranching museum, fulfilling a need expressed by the museum. The pre-service teachers also completed written reflections based on their experiences. This project exemplified the characteristics of service learning as the collaboration was designed both to provide a service to the museum and to meet curricular goals by providing an opportunity for pre-service teachers to gain field experience while teaching children about social studies content at the museum. The researchers found the partnership enabled pre-service teachers to obtain knowledge about instructional methods and design and to act as citizens supporting the local community, reinforcing Marcus et al.’s (2012) depiction of museums as spaces for students to see themselves as “civic actors” (p. 10). In their project asking pre-service teachers to collaborate with a local museum and a historical park, digitizing artifacts, creating brochures, and proposing ideas for a children’s activity center at the park, among other tasks, Waite and Leavell found that the pre-service teachers were able to meet course goals through the project, gaining knowledge and skills relating to National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) curriculum standards.

Increased communication between methods course instructors, teachers, and museum staff may provide additional opportunities (Marcus, 2008). Communicating with museum staff may open up possibilities for pre-service teachers to provide service to the museum, to explore educational opportunities, and to meet curricular objectives in social studies education. Research in civic education and service learning (Kahne & Middaugh, 2010; Wade, 2008) points to the role of service learning in supporting students’ increased civic engagement and participation.
Conclusion
Teachers and students can be encouraged to use museum resources to support learning. Many participants in this study explained that the museum visit either reaffirmed their interest in integrating museum visits into the social studies curriculum or prompted them to observe increased educational value during museum visits. Several participants indicated that they would use museums visits in their future social studies practice.

Because museums are spaces for meaningful learning in social studies (Gregg & Leinhardt, 2002; Marcus, 2007, 2008; Marcus et al., 2012; Todd & Brinkman, 2008; Trofianenko, 2006a, 2006b, 2010), the author believes the course time spent introducing and modeling a museum visit was valuable and contributed to pre-service teachers’ learning. As methods course instructors, we must continue to explore the many opportunities provided by museums for learning, as well as the multiple approaches that we might take to introduce pre-service teachers to the integration of museum visits in social studies education.

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References


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