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Urban Teacher Candidates Discover Inquiry-based Learning While Developing Oral History Projects

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Urban Teacher Candidates Discover Inquiry-based Learning While Developing Oral History Projects

Helping teacher candidates to reassess their educational philosophy is a vital aspect of preparing this generation of candidates to become innovative teachers. Because of federal mandates that have emphasized accountability for the last two decades (Ravitch, 2010), the current generation of American teacher candidates, most often educated in schools that were focused on accountability rather than children's learning, may have never experienced student-centered teaching as students. This trend of focusing on accountability has been strongest in urban schools (Schneider, 2011), and teacher candidates from these settings may be even less likely to have firsthand experience of inquiry-driven curricula.

I argue that the experience of crafting an oral history project is an effective way to guide undergraduate teacher candidates to rethink their traditional beliefs about education and to investigate inquiry-based learning. After describing the context of this study and key related educational concepts, I provide links to three of the students' digital final projects. These demonstrate the type of oral history work urban teacher learners created in an Inquiry in Education course. I then discuss the three themes that emerged across the class' work throughout the semester: the students appreciated having authority over their own work, they encountered the excitement of learning something new, and the experience left them wanting to learn more about their oral history topic. In the discussion of the findings, I describe the value of these experiences through the lens of the educational concept Funds of Knowledge, which highlights the role that family and community knowledge plays in supporting children's learning (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

Research Context

The setting and the Inquiry in Education course

This study took place at a public university in New York City that on its web page for current students (accessed July 29, 2011) boasts 16,000 students who "represent nearly every culture, every language, every religion of our global community" (The City College of New York, n.d.). In fact, 16 of the 25 students in my class were either immigrants or children of immigrants, representing countries such as Cambodia, the Dominican Republic, China, Peru, Guyana, Bosnia, and Togo. Most of the students reported that they were the first in their

families to attend college. Inquiry in Education is the first course that undergraduate teacher candidates take when considering whether to become childhood education majors.

The 21 pre-service undergraduate students in this study were members of a recent section of my Inquiry in Education course. Many began their education coursework with less-than-innovative perceptions of elementary schooling, as shown in the answers to questionnaires they completed about their educational experiences (see Appendix A). They attended New York City public elementary schools or parochial schools. While some described teachers who taught with the use of songs or who incorporated hands-on learning experiences in science class, many more remembered "repetition" as a pedagogical technique in elementary school. One student who had already had taken a couple of education courses described her elementary school experience this way:

> My typical learning experiences were that the teacher and the textbook are always right. Students were required to listen and agree to all the teacher was saying. We basically had little or no voice.

Other typical memories included reading aloud in front of the class, learning grammar and penmanship, and receiving rewards such as stickers for good work. My students' educational histories suggested that they could benefit from an inquiry-driven approach to learning. Most of these students were born in the early 1990s, a time that marked the emergence of market-driven education policy (Ravitch, 2010). Many went to public schools that were strongly influenced by a new federal focus in education on data collection and accountability rather than curriculum and children's learning (Ravitch, 2010). By presenting this research, I argue that given the changes in the national educational system over the last two decades, exposing today's pre-service teachers to inquiry is vital to the development of teacher learners who can draw on such experiences when they are teachers themselves.

Review of Literature

Today's teacher education students have experienced narrowly prescribed approaches to education. This is troubling because, as Lortie (1975) notes in his work on "apprenticeship of observation," teachers' notions of schooling often stem from what they have unofficially learned about the teaching process throughout their own education. Following Lortie, some educational researchers looked at how teacher candidates' beliefs about education were influenced by their own schooling experiences or life experiences (Agee, 1997; Calderhead, 1989). Calderhead found that these influences affected what information the new teachers took from their teacher education programs,

Today's teacher education students have experienced narrowly prescribed approaches to education.

how they thought about teaching, and what type of teachers they became. Along these lines, Moore (2003) explained that in recent years the field experience during pre-service students' education programs had become more procedure oriented and less inquiry oriented. Moore, however, also noted that some teacher educators encouraged pre-service teachers to better grasp inquiry-based approaches to teaching. These teachers learned about inquiry by seeing it enacted in real classrooms during field experiences, rather than learning about it as an abstract concept in theory seminars (Moore, 2003).

This study builds on Moore's perspective, exploring how conducting an oral history project can develop in pre-service teachers a more inquiry-oriented approach to learning. Inquiry-driven education is an often-misunderstood teaching theory derived from the work of educators such as John Dewey and Paolo Freire. In Freire's words, inquiry-driven education values educational experiences in which the students are not "docile listeners" but rather "critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher" (Freire, 1993, p. 62). This approach differs from my students' educational experiences—experiences in which, as Freire describes, teachers are rewarded for seeing the students as mere receptacles or containers that need to be filled. According to this standard, Freire writes, "the more completely she [the teacher] fills the receptacles, the better a teacher she is" (1993, p. 53).

On the contrary, inquiry-based teaching doesn't focus on filling students with content information. In inquiry-based curriculum, after becoming familiar with a topic, the students are supported in exploring and finding significant questions to ask about the topic that can help them to make new discoveries. The students then research their questions using a variety of methods and tools—looking at the question from multiple perspectives. Finally, the students share their discoveries and develop new questions that build on previous work. This creates a recursive and cyclical aspect of inquiry, in keeping with the belief system that learning is an ongoing process (Short et al., 1996).

In addition to demonstrating the concept of inquiry, oral history offers a second crucial benefit to students: it helps them to recognize the knowledge they bring to the classroom in the form of their own family and community backgrounds. This recognition of the value of personal, family, and community knowledge is called Funds of Knowledge.

Funds of Knowledge provides a framework for understanding teaching that calls attention to the important role that family and community knowledge plays in supporting children's learning (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Originally developed by Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg in the late 1980s (Ougton, 2010), Funds of Knowledge is an educational concept that began as a reaction to deficit theorizing, a commonly held viewpoint even in research of contemporary teachers' viewpoints that blames the underachievement of ethnic minority children on perceived inadequacies relating to the children's experiences (Hogg,

2011). The work of researchers of Funds of Knowledge grew as a rebuttal to these deficit beliefs, building on the work of literature related to multicultural education and culturally relevant pedagogy (Hogg, 2011). According to Oughton (2010), due to the extension by Moll et al. (1992) of the idea of Funds of Knowledge from anthropology to education, the concept gained much of its power to disrupt deficit theorizing and to transform teachers' beliefs and attitudes. Educators informed by the concept of Funds of Knowledge draw on what they learn about families in their classrooms to develop curricula relevant to their students' experiences and understandings. Still, few models exist for developing such a connection to one's students' Funds of Knowledge, and those who do this work find that the connections are not always easy or apparent. For instance, in a study of the Funds of Knowledge that second-grade students brought to her urban classroom, Sugarman (2010) required several readings of data and help from colleagues before she could uncover the strengths of her students' families.

Engaging students in constructing oral histories has been recognized as a teaching method to enact students' Funds of Knowledge in the pre-service classroom (Hogg, 2010; Olmeda, 1997). Of particular importance to my study is Olmedo's (1997) research that describes the value of using oral histories in K–12 classrooms as a way to tap into children's Funds of Knowledge. Olmedo argued that using oral histories in the classroom was a way to make the social studies curriculum more accessible to bilingual and English as a Second Language students because it provided an opportunity to see parallels between countries, to incorporate students' families' experiences and knowledge into the curriculum, and to practice oral skills in both of their languages during the processes of interviewing and translating (1997).

Despite Olmedo's work, the research on how teacher educators use oral history to teach pre-service teachers is sparse. Johnson claimed that, "In social studies teacher education, it is common to promote the use of oral stories and histories to seek multiple perspectives and historical thinking in the classroom"; however, Johnson adds, "pre-service teachers are given few opportunities to internalize this idea" (2007, p. 197). One example of using oral history to teach pre-service teachers is described by Boyle-Baise, who introduced her students to oral history when she had her class work on a community oral history project in order to learn about service learning (2005). Oral history as a narrative form is most commonly integrated in the K–12 social studies education curriculum.[1] But as yet, no research exists that specifically uses oral history to develop an understanding of inquiry-driven education.

[1] Textbooks and guides on using oral histories as a learning tool in K–12 classrooms include Daniel Kelin's *To Feel as Our Ancestors Did: Collecting and Performing Oral Histories* (2005), Cynthia Stokes' *Like it Was: A Complete Guide to Writing Oral History* (2000), and Pamela Dean, Toby Daspit, and Petra Munro's *Talking Gumbo: A Teacher's Guide To Using Oral History in the Classroom* (1998).

Methodology

This study examines the culminating oral history projects and other related coursework during one semester of an Inquiry in Education course. It explores the following research questions:

1. What evidence suggests that the work the students did for their own oral history inquiry projects helped them to understand inquiry-driven instruction?
2. How do the oral history projects model the use of Funds of Knowledge in the classroom?

Participants

The participants were 21 students from my fall 2010 section of Inquiry in Education. The participants were recruited at the beginning of the semester when I described the study and asked the members of the class for their consent, explaining that they would be referred to by pseudonyms and that no negative ramifications would result if they chose not to participate in the study. Of the 25 students enrolled in the course, 22 signed consent forms approved by the Internal Review Board and 1 student chose not to participate during the semester.

Data collection

To understand the data collection process, readers need to know how my section of this course was organized. We began by creating timelines of our own lives, including important historical dates; we shared these sketches of our histories in a "gallery walk" (Short et al., 1996; Stokes, 2000). I then introduced some classic texts about inquiry in education, such as those by John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and Eleanor Duckworth. Simultaneously, we began exploring the subject of oral history. I showed the class examples of documentaries, StoryCorps audio recordings, fiction about oral history, and peer-reviewed oral histories articles; together we identified key components to this research form. So that the students learned about interviewing, I invited a guest, for whom we prepared by developing interview questions. We then interviewed the guest and collectively analyzed our interview techniques (Stokes, 2000).

Each student proposed his or her own oral history project. When the proposed projects were approved, the students began interviewing their participants; collecting information about the historical context of the topic; and finding interesting visual data for the presentation, such as photographs, newspapers, artifacts, or films. I encouraged the students to be creative in how they presented their work. The students worked again in groups to discuss and analyze their data, develop emerging themes, and narrate or otherwise present the histories that they researched. The semester ended with the oral history presentation and a synthesis paper in which students forged connections between theoretical written concepts

about inquiry, the personal experience of conducting an oral history project, and how the experience influenced their thinking about elementary education in general.

For this study, data collection began with an initial inventory about the students' educational background and experiences (see Appendix A). This inventory provided information about the students' experiences in elementary school. The students' work throughout the semester was collected; this included updates written in class about the oral history projects, their reflections on the readings, Blackboard discussions, two fieldwork assignments (papers related to the students' experience in classrooms), a synthesis paper written at the end of the semester, and the oral history projects. I also collected the course syllabus, my lesson plan notes, my teaching logs, and other relevant artifacts.

Data analysis

I analyzed copies of all the coursework from the Inquiry course during the fall 2010 semester. I took the following steps in analyzing the data:

1. I read and reread these data, noting initial codes.
2. Through this grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I then moved to "focusing" the codes as relevant themes were revealed (Charmez, 2006). I chose themes because they were supported by ample, relevant data, and I interrogated the themes for disconfirming evidence.
3. For each working theme, I collected all the supporting data—for example, quotes from papers or quotes from my class notes—in separate files. I then read the materials until I could develop a way of describing the theme that best characterized the data.
4. Through some, but not all, of the data analysis, I shared my data and codes with a colleague who provided feedback on the strengths and weakness of my analysis.
5. In addition to determining these emergent themes, I analyzed the data for the a priori theme of how the oral history project facilitated the use of Funds of Knowledge in the classroom.

Despite making these efforts to support my analysis with multiple data sources, I acknowledge that qualitative research is interpretive and that this is my own "attempt to make sense of what I have learned" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 37). The story of the research is my interpretation of the experiences in my classroom.

Examples of student work

To show the type of work conducted in this class, and to show how the studies built on the students' culture and community, this article includes links to three of the students' digital oral history projects. These projects were not representative

of all the projects done by the class, but were selected because they demonstrated the diversity of subject matter, the types of topics that interested the students, and the construction of the projects. Each of these students selected his or her own topic, interviewed friends and relatives in his or her community to learn about the topic, and conducted library or Internet research to provide a historical context for the work. The students who created these studies were new to research and were introduced to these forms of technology for the first time in this class.

Linda's project: *The Good Old Days—New York in the '30s.* Linda's study, *The Good Old Days—New York in the '30s*, is the story of her friend's grandmother, who grew up in New York City's Greenwich Village in the 1930s. Linda's expectation was that her participant would tell her about the hardships of living through the Depression, but Linda learned that Ms. Sanchez had very positive memories of the time period. Linda wrote this about her experience:

> The assignment suited my tastes very well. It combined creativity and a chance to tinker around with new technologies with history… Instead of getting a prefabricated analysis of the subject we chose to explore, I found it fun to collect raw data and make my own analysis, based on my findings, as if I was the historian or detective piecing together the information to create a clear picture.

Linda let her imagination go as she worked on the project. She even wrote a short script for her friend to read as if he were a 1930s news announcer, illustrating some of his grandmother's story with films, family photographs, and copies of newspaper stories.

> *The Good Old Days—New York in the '30s:*
> http://youtu.be/brF8S7NCLyY

Monifa's project: *Remembering Biafra.* Monifa interviewed her mother and a family friend from her church for her story of *Remembering Biafra*, about the Nigerian Civil War in the late 1960s. She reported that she felt "really scared" at first because she had never interviewed anyone before. She expressed surprise that she was guided through the process of developing her interview and had opportunities in class to talk about the "stumbling blocks" she faced so that she could "come up with different ways to overcome them." In the end, many of the students in the class, including those who did not know about the Biafra Civil War, were deeply moved by Monifa's project.

> *Remembering Biafra:*
> http://youtu.be/fabOqaxclmI

Isabel's project: *Lost in Cambodia.* Isabel used this assignment as an opportunity to better understand the history of Cambodia, her mother's homeland. She explained, "There were some missing links my family didn't tell me about."

Isabel told the story of a cousin who was separated from both his parents and grandparents during the genocide that took place in Cambodia when the Khmer Rouge ruled the country in the late 1970s. She shared her cousin's recorded story while showing pictures of Cambodia, photographs of her family members, and newspaper articles about her cousin's return to his parents. Isabel's cousin's story, of adjusting to the new culture of the United States and of the awkwardness he felt returning to Cambodia later in his life, was of great interest to the students in this class, as many of them were from families that had recently immigrated to the United States.

> *Lost in Cambodia:*
> http://youtu.be/_AJEGJocaKA

Findings

Learning through inquiry: Themes across the class' work

This section describes themes that emerged in my analysis of the class' written work throughout the semester.

I looked through all the student work and my notes from the semester to see what evidence existed that the students learned about inquiry through their oral history projects. As I read and reread the students' work from the entire semester and coded and sorted the data, three categories emerged: (1) enjoying the feeling of having their own authority over their work, (2) seeing the world in a new way as a result of their learning experience, and (3) wishing to learn more.

The categories are somewhat flexible and overlapping. The paragraphs that follow describe how I distinguished between these ideas and what these categories tell teacher educators about the potential benefits of this type of inquiry project for teacher learners.

Having the authority to direct their work. As noted, a central notion in inquiry-oriented learning is that the learning evolves from the learner's questions. This kind of learning is quite different from what my students remembered from their own elementary school experiences: memorizing information, filling in short answers in workbooks, and being tested for right answers. In contrast, while working on their oral history projects, these students had to ask their own questions, develop their own ideas, and allow their projects to evolve. This experience felt both motivating and challenging to the undergraduate students.

The students worked on their own questions to guide their projects. As they researched the historical context of their projects using peer-reviewed journals and discussed their emerging ideas, their research questions changed. Usually, they started their work from familiar territory—they chose to learn about relatives, friends, or professors they knew. Some of the students, such as Mary,

who learned about her father's choice to join the armed forces during the Vietnam War, noted that she felt motivated because the topic she had selected was one with which she felt emotionally connected. Mary explained, "I felt like I did not need to push myself to try to do well; I simply tried my best because I was deeply connected to my subject." Others, like Naomi, appreciated being her "own boss, because for once I had the chance to ask my own questions." For other students, having this independence was also difficult. Linda explained, "Choosing an interviewee and a subject to focus on was probably the most challenging step to take." For students like Linda, who had always been assigned papers with prescribed parameters, the freedom of the oral history project was uncomfortable.

"I felt like I did not need to push myself to try to do well; I simply tried my best because I was deeply connected to my subject."

Meanwhile, some students said that in addition to being able to create their own guiding question for the oral history project, having the ability to make choices regarding how to present their work was also motivating. For instance, Pilar imagined what would have happened if the project's directions were more prescribed: "We would have followed step by step her [the professor's] directions, and our oral history presentations would have been very similar to each other except for the subject matter. Instead from what I have witnessed so far, our presentations have shown creativity and are acts of love." Experiencing schoolwork as "acts of love" places the work in the power of the student, rather than framing it as a chore to be completed to satisfy the professor. Through this work, the students were able to experience how they were motivated by having the power to direct their own work.

Excitement over learning something new. For many of the students, the project was an opportunity to study something related to their own histories in which they had long been interested. Many of the students didn't know about aspects of their cultural histories and found learning about their own backgrounds to be meaningful. As noted earlier, Isabel took this as an opportunity to learn about the history of Cambodia, her mother's homeland. Likewise, Milagros explored why her mother might have had positive memories of life in the Dominican Republic during the reign of the brutal dictator Trujillo.

Some students described how this experience was important because it was about their family and they learned information they hadn't previously known. For instance, Elmira began her project with a focus on immigration during the 1990s from Eastern Europe to America. However, when she interviewed her aunt, her aunt mentioned the start of the Bosnian Genocide. Elmira, who had not known that her own parents left Bosnia because they sensed a violent future there, went on to explain that she refined her topic as she continued to learn more about her family's experiences. She wrote, "I became tremendously engaged and motivated to find out more information about the Bosnian Genocide." She said that her interest in the topic was "a new curiosity."

Because students began their work in an area in which they felt comfortable and had some authentic interest, some were motivated to find resources and read more about their topics. Tania explained what she learned:

> I learned not only about our family's experience, but also about the actual historical context behind it. I had no idea there had been a civil war in the Dominican Republic. The only stories I had heard about my grandfather, who passed away before I got a chance to meet him, were based on how strict he was. No one had ever spoken to me about his actual experiences of being trapped in the war and why the war had occurred in the first place.

Tania went on to explain how she learned about resources at the college through this project, including the Dominican Archives, which provided her with literature and an overview about the war: "I became so interested with the topic that I couldn't wait to begin the creation of my movie."

Many students also found that hearing testimonies from people was a meaningful part of this experience. Daisy explained that after reading articles about the topic of her study, life in the South Bronx in the 1980s, interviewing her participant helped her to have a better understanding of what life was like there. She commented, "The topic was very interesting and I was familiar with it. The very fact that I was able to interact with someone who lived through the experience, made the general topic all the more understandable." Even interviewing a close family member, such as when Vanessa interviewed her brother about being a Navy Seal, sometimes led to new discoveries. Vanessa commented, "His experiences were interesting to hear because it was a real life story; it wasn't something that I would see or hear in the news every day. It was his personal story and experiences about the war which I now look at differently."

Jonathan, who wrote about his family's bakery in Mexico, described in detail his fascination with hearing his recording of his mother's voice. Jonathan described himself as "arrogant" at the beginning of the semester and explained that initially he "didn't feel the need to learn or inquire about something if I didn't find it interesting or meaningful." He wrote about the experience of interviewing his mother:

> When I got home that night I remember listening to the interview through my headphones. Hearing her talk about her father and her family was better than any song I had ever heard. The different tones, and levels of emotion in her voice over her family made this project something completely different for me. Ultimately, it was a part of my history and something that has affected my mother's frame of thought so much that I felt so privileged to hear these stories yet so ashamed to brush these stories off for so long. The more I asked about my grandfather's life, I found

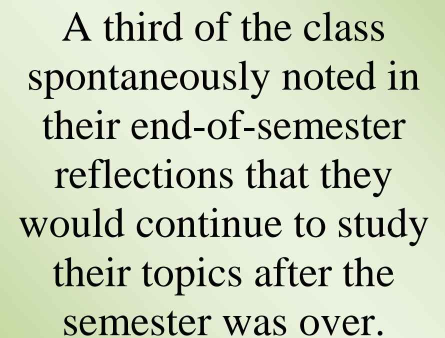
> pleasure in learning of these events and managed to find my appreciation for knowledge again. Were it not for this project, I would not have learned to see my family in a different light and, more importantly, I would have not found a different perspective for myself.

Some, like Jonathan, found that the value of the project transcended doing work for a school project and was instead connected to learning about himself.

Wanting to know more. The oral history project was compelling to the students and encouraged them to "share responsibility for their own learning and the learning of their peers" (Wisehart, 2004, p. 46), an important tenet in inquiry-driven education. While conducting the oral history projects about friends, family, and community members, the students began seeing their work as their own, not something they were simply completing for the professor. Students shared their projects with friends and family and posted their films on YouTube for the world to see.

A third of the class spontaneously noted in their end-of-semester reflections that they would continue to study their topics after the semester was over. Monifa made a connection between her experience with her oral history and John Dewey's (1938) description of an educational experience (as opposed to "miseducational" experience) as one in which the conditions are created for further growth. She wrote the following:

> I believe this oral history project has definitely created a condition for further growth for me, because I have a great urge to learn more about the Biafran War. I plan to interview more people. I feel as if there are still many more interesting hidden stories out there that I have yet to uncover.



The oral history projects became a recursive learning experience, like inquiry-driven curricula. New understandings from interviews and library research led to new questions.

Discussion

Building on students' Funds of Knowledge

The idea of Funds of Knowledge holds that education is improved when teachers learn about children's everyday lives and incorporate this knowledge into the curriculum. This approach to creating curricula is particularly important for teachers working in larger urban areas, where teachers are "challenged to address the changing diversity of their student population and the issues associated with

poverty" (Mercado, 2005, p. 251). Typically, this method requires that teachers work as ethnographers—that they use interviews, field notes, participant observations, and life-history narratives and that they go into students' homes and communities to learn about the ways they make sense of their everyday lives (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

Although the oral history project in my course was not identical to the Funds of Knowledge process as described by Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti (2005), oral history projects are nonetheless uniquely suited for modeling the use of the Funds of Knowledge in the classroom. As explained, the students in my course were encouraged to develop their own research questions and often selected topics related to their families, community, and culture. As supporting evidence for their work, the students used the resources of their communities—from studying the Dominican Republic at the Dominican Archive; to interviewing friends and family; to using artifacts from home, photographs, and newspaper clippings.

These projects demonstrated to these new pre-service students how a multicultural curriculum can be dynamic, as opposed to what Amanti (2005) described as typical approaches to discussion of culture in public schools in which "culture is portrayed as homogenous and frozen in time, such as when teachers engage their students in learning about the holidays, food, typical costumes, and art of their own or other cultures" (p. 131). Amanti explained that the current "special event" approach unintentionally devalues the everyday experiences of many minoritized and immigrant students in the United States (2005). In contrast, the oral history projects provided the students an opportunity to ask authentic questions that guided their research about subjects that were meaningful to their lives. The focus on collecting information from primary sources encouraged the students to gather artifacts and to interview people who directly experienced the historical events they studied. These interviews brought the expertise of the local community into our classroom, which enriched our learning experiences.

These interviews brought the expertise of the local community into our classroom, which enriched our learning experiences.

As a teacher educator, I have difficulty expecting new teachers to build on their students' Funds of Knowledge if they haven't had the experience of exploring their own curiosity about their own histories and cultures. Many of the students in this class learned new information about their own families and cultures in the process of developing their oral history projects. These projects also presented an opening for students in the class to learn about one another's histories and, through these stories, to learn about the world. For example, many of the students in my class didn't know about the genocide in Bosnia until hearing about Elmira's project. I suspect that, when they learned about their classmates' families' stories, they gained new empathy for each other. In fact, during one class session when the students were troubleshooting and sharing their works in progress in groups,

Naomi called me over to her group and warned me that I was going to have to bring in some tissue boxes for the presentations because they were going to be very emotional.

Along with my students, I have learned from these personal accounts more about the history and culture of populations of students with whom I have been working for over a decade. I have a better understanding of the sacrifices my students' families have made to come to this country, and this understanding has motivated me to be as rigorous as ever to prepare the students to succeed as teachers for their own future students.

Conclusion

Moll (2005) reminds us that schooling practices and issues of political power are interwoven, and as a result, working-class children in the United States usually receive a "reduced and intellectually inferior curriculum compared to their wealthier peers" (p. 276). Because of this, providing powerful learning experiences for urban teacher learners—teachers who were both educated in urban schools and who will likely teach in urban schools—is vital.

A growing literature by teacher educators describes work in the field of education to enable new teachers to teach passionately in this time when high-stakes testing has come to dominate curricula in classrooms across the country (Shrock, 2004). Shrock writes that now, more than ever, teacher educators need to "inoculate" teacher candidates against the pressures of high-stakes testing and the culture of accountability so they can teach passionately (p. 67). Creating places of sustained and positive learning for teachers and teacher learners is a crucial step in developing such contexts for children (Fried, 2001). Fried emphasized this, explaining, "We must remind ourselves that learning is one of the most fascinating and rewarding activities for human beings" (2001, p. 4).

I argue that to remind ourselves that learning is fascinating and rewarding is especially urgent when we work in urban settings where teacher candidates may have been students in lackluster elementary school classrooms that focused on accountability rather than the love of learning. Oral history has the potential to provide one such model of fascinating learning. The students in this study became engrossed in their work on their oral history projects and felt proud enough of their final work to want to share them with an audience. My hope is that these students will draw on this experience when they develop new powerful learning experiences with their future students. My next step with this work will be to follow students from the course into their student teaching experiences to see how they make sense of inquiry while working in New York City classrooms.

Megan Blumenreich is Associate Professor of Childhood Education and Director of the Childhood Education Program at The City College of New York, CUNY. Her research interests include urban education, teacher inquiry, and qualitative research methodologies. She is co-author of *Teaching Matters: Stories from Inside Urban Schools*, The New Press, 2012.

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Appendix A: Educational History Questionnaire

Name: (optional)

Email address: (optional)

What year are you in college—Sophomore, Junior, …?

Have you taken other education courses?

If yes, please list the courses here:

Questions about your schooling experiences

Feel free to leave blank any question that seems too personal

1. Describe your parents' educational experiences.
2. Where did you attend elementary school? (If more than one elementary school, please include both)
3. Name of the school:
4. Location:
5. Describe a memorable learning experience you had in elementary school. What made it memorable? Describe.
6. What were typical learning experiences you had in elementary school? Describe.
7. Why have you decided to take this Inquiry in Education course?
8. Do you plan on becoming a teacher when you graduate from college? Why?