Digital Bridges for Global Awareness: Pre-Service Social Studies Teachers' Experiences Using Technology to Learn from and Teach Students in Thailand

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Abstract: In order to ensure teachers are willing and ready to promote global perspectives in their classrooms, pre-service social studies teachers must know how to teach about the world, its people, and issues (Merryfield, 2000). This manuscript describes a qualitative research study that undertook an 8 month qualitative investigation at a large Midwestern university into secondary social studies methods students' perceptions of participating in a digitally mediated global learning project with secondary students in Thailand. Methods students participated in weekly correspondences and learning activities with Thai students that aimed to advance cross-cultural understandings and global learning. Findings reveal that methods students believed their participation in this project served as an authentic opportunity to learn and apply best practices in teaching and learning, in particular, in social studies and global education, and that their participation in this project was beneficial as it provided a necessary concrete example to build from in planning and implementing their own digitally mediated global learning project. Finally, implications of these findings and future lines of inquiry are discussed.

Key words: global education, social studies methods, pre-service teachers, technology

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As globalization influences the economic, political, environmental, and socio-cultural realities of citizens, there is a growing need to better equip social studies teachers and their students for an increasingly multicultural and global age (Maira, 2004; Reimers, 2006). Drawing on the importance of schools as institutions to prepare engaged citizens, the noted American philosopher John Dewey (1900, p. 16) stated, "The world without its relationship to human activity is less than a world." In order to effectively prepare citizens for active participation in a global community, schools have an obligation to help students understand how they are connected to citizens, businesses, organizations, issues, histories, and movements around the world. This includes teaching students how to best learn about and reach across cultural differences and geographic boundaries to confront the serious global ecological, economic, political, and social issues of our day.

To remedy the need for attuned global citizens, the National Council for the Social Studies' Position Statement on Global Education (2001) encourages social studies teachers to help students, "develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed for responsible participation in a democratic society and in a global community in the twenty-first century" (p. 1). To gain this global perspective, students must see the Earth as a finite system whose people share a common fate, while acknowledging the cultural diversity, multiple perspectives, and unequal access to resources that define our planet (Kirkwood-Tucker, 2003; Gaudelli, 2003). In all respects, citizens today, whether they acknowledge it

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or not, are deeply influenced by actions and inactions of other citizens around the world (Pike & Selby, 2000).

Pre-service social studies teacher education programs are at the forefront of equipping teachers with best practices and resources to engage students (Adler, 1991). In order to ensure teachers are willing and ready to promote a global perspective in their classrooms, pre-service social studies teachers must be prepared to discuss issues of culture and global interconnectedness in their classroom (Merryfield, 2002). There has been a call for social studies teachers in many countries around the world to be prepared to teach about global cultures, issues, and perspectives to advance national interests (Pike, 2000; Tye & Kiep, 1991; Kasai; 2007). Social studies methods courses serve as laboratories whereby teacher candidates can experiment with instructional methods and approaches (Adler, 1991). As social studies teachers are prepared with the global literacies and understandings necessary in today's age, they will be better situated to promote a global perspective amongst their students (Merryfield, 2000).

With citizenship education being at the heart of the social studies, informed 21st century citizenship demands that U.S. citizens understand how regions and people from around the world are connected economically, environmentally, politically, and socially. In many ways, what U.S. citizens, its government, and businesses do and do not do matter to the rest of the world. This includes the United State having over 600 military bases in over 130 nations ("Ron Paul says," 2011), providing 49% of all world food aid (World Food Programme, 2006), being the world's largest exporter of commercial services, and the second largest exporter for merchandise (U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, 2012), and it having the largest CO_2 emissions per capita in the world (Olivier, Janssens-Maenhout, Muntean, & Peters, 2013).

Because U.S. policies and actions having a profound impact on the rest of the world, U.S. citizens need to know how global issues, people, businesses, and movements impact the U.S. Nuclear proliferation, war, terrorism, poverty, and climate change are all issues that cannot be remedied by one country acting alone, but jeopardizes the health and safety of all U.S. citizens. These significant global issues can only be overcome through meaningful global dialogue, mutual understanding, and action. In many ways, products, people, and policies from outside of the United States continue to shape life inside the United States. American consumers are becoming ever more dependent upon world trade and imports. For example, there is a growing U.S. demand for foreign automobiles (think South Korea and Hyundai and Kia), European music (think One Direction and Adele) and international foods (think Columbian coffee and flowers). Furthermore, a growing number of immigrants, international university students, and foreign tourists are coming into the United States, making the United States an increasingly diverse country, both culturally and linguistically. As the distance between societies, schools, and households from around the world allows quicker and more efficient access to technology, this same use of technology can be an essential tool in preparing pre-service social studies teachers for a global and diverse age (Maguth, 2013).

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This manuscript describes a qualitative research study that undertook an 8 month qualitative investigation into pre-service social studies teachers' perceptions of participating in a digitally mediated global learning project with students in Thailand. Inspired by the mantra "being the change you wish to see," and using the 2012 College University Faculty Assembly (CUFA) Annual Conference as an incubator, I decided to plan a research study that allowed U.S. pre-service social studies candidates to learn from and teach students in Thailand. In particular, I set out to better understand:

- In what ways does their participation in a digitally mediated global learning project shape teacher candidates' perceptions towards teaching the social studies?
- And, in what ways does their participation in a digitally mediated global learning project complicate and mediate their desire and ability to plan and enact such projects in the future?

In the sections that follow, I discuss the theoretical perspectives and literature that shaped this collaboration, the design and implementation of this digitally mediated global learning project, and I provide an overview of research findings and implications that emerged from research on this project.

Theoretical Framework and Overview of Literature

In thinking about ways in which I could design and research a digitally mediated global learning experience for students, I pulled from research and literature in two areas: global education and the use of technology within global education. Insights gained from my review of the literature in these areas were integral to the overall project and research design.

Thirteen years into the 21st century social studies teachers and teacher educators are still struggling to infuse global education into their curriculum. A lack of "curricular space," teacher professional development, limited student background knowledge, controversy over highlighting global perspectives, instead of a U.S. perspective on issues, and inadequate instructional resources and strategies have all been reasons educators offer that prevent them from integrating global perspectives (Metzger, 1988). While some states have enacted policies placing greater emphasis on PK-12 global education curricula (Marzo, 2005), significant hurdles still remain in the preparation of teachers and students for an increasingly global and technological age.

While many challenges exist, teacher preparation programs serve as a significant venue for future teachers to learn the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required of their students in a globally interconnected age (Kelley, 2004). However, despite the insistent calls, research continues to indicate that U.S. pre-service and in-service teacher education programs are doing very little to prepare social studies teachers to teach about the world, its issues, and people (Mansilla & Gardner, 2007; Merryfield, 2000; Okpokodu, 2010: Tye & Tye, 1992). Upon reviewing 15 different popularly adopted textbooks used in U.S. social studies methods courses, Okpokodu (2010) found that absent in all of these books were discussions of global pedagogy and perspectives, and only one referenced

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germane issues in social studies in a global context. Much in line with Zong's (2009) findings, the U.S. social studies teachers I have worked with, while perceiving their value, often feel underprepared and overwhelmed in planning lessons and activities that advance global perspectives.

In social studies, pre-service training programs—especially, content area methods courses—are significant in readying competent and confident teachers (Adler, 1991). Knowing that many teachers and schools struggle to prepare the global citizens that our society, communities, and world need, I set out to use my pre-service methods courses as a learning laboratory whereby teacher candidates could feel safe experimenting with and learning how to integrate technology to teach for global awareness.

Teacher Education and Global Citizenship Education

In readying citizens for membership in a global and multicultural society, teachers are charged with the responsibility of fostering the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for "good" global citizenship. Merry Merryfield (2002), a leading international figure in global education, defines a global educator as, "those teachers whose students learn global perspectives on equity, diversity, and interconnectedness" (p. 18). Teachers that infuse a global perspective in their classrooms move students to confront injustices and discrimination. Toni Kirkwood-Tucker (2003), states that global educators help instill, "attitudes, values, knowledge, and skills that are necessary for students to become competent, responsible, participatory, and compassionate citizens of their community, state, nation, and world" (p. 93). Educators that undertake the challenge of readying students for democratic citizenship in a global and complex age help prepare their students to work with a diverse citizenry committed to a deeper level of understanding in order to confront both local and global challenges.

Global educators promote essential skills, knowledge, and attitudes amongst their students in order to improve their local and global condition. Pike and Selby (2000) describe how students that gain a global perspective commit to the principle of "one world in which the interests of particular societies and nations are viewed in light of the overall needs of the planet" (p. 140). Students come to view their dependence on the planet's resources as a unifier between different cultures and states. Infusing a global perspective in the classroom helps geographically distant and culturally diverse students work together in sustaining our planet by encouraging students to understand how nations around the world are mutually dependent upon the Earth's limited resources. Climate change, deforestation, and even international trade are issues that allow educators to depict how consumption and actions in one area of the world influences the whole global system. Robert Hanvey (1976) calls this process, "state of the planet awareness" whereby students gain "an awareness of prevailing world conditions and development, including emergent conditions and trends, e.g. population growth, migration, economic conditions, resources and physical environment, political developments, science and technology, law, health, inter-nation and intra-nation conflicts, etc." (p. 7). Through global education, citizens learn about the world's cultural,

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economic, and geographic diversity. Furthermore, the mutual human dependence on a healthy, peaceful, and just planet is reaffirmed.

Teacher educators have urgently been called to prepare PK-12 teachers that are able to infuse global perspectives in their teaching. This call has been based on the need for schools to turn out citizens that understand how their economic, political, and environmental choices connect them to the rest of the world. Organizations such as the Longview Foundation, the Asia Society, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the National Research Council (NRC), and the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) have long called for adding a global dimension to teacher education (Asia Society, 2008; CCSSO, 2006; Longview Foundation, 2008; NRC, 2007; NCSS, 2001). Despite the heavy rhetoric of these organizations, there has been a significant research deficit in understanding the practice of teachers and teacher educators in fostering a global perspective in their classrooms (Anderson, Bruce, & Podemski, 1991; Gaudelli, 2003; Merryfield, 1997; Zong, 2009). As Guichun Zong (2009) correctly points out in her research, even with weighty calls to better prepare educators to teach with/about a global society, there has been little research and journal space given to the exploration of best practices in teacher education for global citizenship education. This study sought to narrow this research deficit by better understanding how social studies method students' participation in a digitally mediated global learning project influenced their perceptions towards teaching the social studies, and what, if any, impact does their participation have on their desire and ability to plan and enact such projects in the future.

Global Citizenship, Teacher Education, and Technology

As globalization influences the economic, political, environmental, and sociocultural realities of communities, there is a growing need to integrate curriculum and instructional practices that foster informed and engaged citizens- capable of upholding the office of citizen in a global age. As access to technology grows inside and outside of the classroom, the use of computers and the Internet by educators and students holds great potential in preparing in-demand global citizens (Maguth, 2013). In 2009, over 93 percent of U.S. PK-12 public school teachers reported having at least one computer connected to the Internet in their classroom, and teachers reported a 5.3 to 1 ratio of students to computers (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Outside of having growing access to information communication technologies in the classroom, organizations like the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) have created standards and resources to help support teachers and students in meaningfully integrating technology into the curriculum (ISTE, 2012). While serious challenges still face teachers and teacher educators in using technology to impart a global perspective (i.e., global digital divide, curricular space, lack of professional training, issues of representation, etc.), new technologies present a unique possibility for teachers and students to reach outside their classrooms and communities to learn about global perspectives, issues, and cultures. Furthermore, these possibilities can be imparted to future educators through their teacher preparation programs.

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Research indicates that, when incorporated meaningfully, the integration of technology into the university classroom holds the potential to promote cross-cultural awareness (Merryfield, 2000) and global understandings (Maguth, 2013). For instance, Merryfield (2000) noted that her teacher education students demonstrated cross-cultural competence, appreciation of differences, and global perspectives when interacting online through discussion boards.

From Beijing to New York, one cannot walk down the street without seeing someone talking, texting, or surfing the Internet on their cell phones, laptops, or tablet PCs. Because of these technological developments, commerce, transportation, communications, and patterns of information flow have been altered. In the past, personal correspondences could only be relayed through costly telephone services or lengthy lines at neighborhood post offices. New technologies like social networking, video-conferencing, blogs, and e-mail allow for low-cost, instantaneous global communications. Individuals can now access news headlines and blogs from around the world. Previous generations were dependent upon their physical location in determining opportunities for membership in associations and networks. However, today's Internet user can instantaneously connect with millions of other worldly users in chat rooms, nings, or blogs.

These same technologies also afford people from around the world access to new educational opportunities inside and outside of the classroom. For instance, Paul Kim and fellow researchers at Stanford University are employing mobile learning technologies to promote literacy, numeracy, health, human rights, and self-empowerment amongst indigenous children in Latin America (Kim, 2009). Here in the United States, students at the University of Southern California in partnership with mtvU, created a narrative-based online simulation whereby "gamers", from the perspective of a displaced Darfurian, negotiate forces that threaten the survival of his or her refugee camp. It offers a glimpse into the horrors faced by more than 2.5 million internally displaced people by the crisis in Sudan (Darfurisdying.org).

The use of the technology, the Internet in particular, offers teachers and students opportunities to access a vast number of global perspectives, sources, and people (Merryfield, 2000; Brooks, 2011; West, 2010; Glimps, & Ford, 2008). Merry Merryfield (2000) describes how the use of online threaded discussions fostered a culturally diverse learning community in her class. In an article entitled, Using Electronic Technologies to Promote Equity and Cultural Diversity in *Social Studies and Global Education*, Merryfield (2000) notes:

> resistance to engaging in discussions on hard topics [like issues of race, white privilege, power, inequality, homophobia, and prejudice] disappear when I take discussions online. . . . This frankness and open flow of thoughts and experiences is shared equally by teachers from other countries [outside the United States]. (p. 513)

The use of an online threaded discussion affords students, especially, international students and students of color, new opportunities in the discussion of culturally sensitive issues. Catherine Brooks' (2011) study adds to this finding in that students' use of technology is a beneficial first step in promoting intercultural conversations and communities. For students unable to travel abroad,

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web-based technologies can serve as an important tool to, "bring the outside world to campus" (West, 2010).

Outside of the university setting, there are some PK-12th grade teachers that are harnessing the educative potential of technology to foster global awareness and citizens. Maguth & Elliott (2008) studied the use of podcasting to foster a global perspective in a high school social studies classroom. In this assignment, students took on global personalities and perspectives to engage in an audio recorded town hall meeting on the merits of global warming. A few months later, Maguth, Yamaguchi and Elliott (2010) discussed the ways in which high school social studies students planned, filmed, and distributed online digital movies geared towards global advocacy. Yukhymenko and Brown's (2009) study investigated the use of information-communication technologies by 122 students in Ukraine. In this report, the researchers concluded that student access and use of technology holds the potential in facilitating global citizenship.

As the digital, global civic commons grows, one must question whether social studies teachers and teacher educators are preparing students to meaningfully harness the use of these technologies to learn and teach about global issues, to help students access and think through multiple perspectives, and to interact with and learn about different cultures. These questions, and my pursuit to better understand their answers, led to the planning, implementation, and research of a digitally mediated global learning project in a social studies methods course.

Methodology

Drawing from the theoretical underpinnings presented above, I designed a digitally mediated global learning project that promoted authentic cross-cultural interactions and global understandings. Knowing that university social studies methods courses serve as a significant venue for teacher candidates to learn about and experiment with alternative instructional methods and approaches (Adler, 1991), I felt this digitally mediated global learning project was well positioned within my course goals. In my syllabus, I state that by the end of this course teacher candidates will:

- Develop a standards based lesson that provides secondary students with the opportunity to draw from best practices in global education, and learn about global cultures and issues inherent for global citizenship.
- Become familiar with a variety of instructional strategies advocated in the professional social studies literature, to reflect upon the efficacy of such strategies, and to engage in classroom discussion with colleagues about them.

This research study was designed to allow for a focused examination on teacher candidates' learning in my secondary social studies methods course. Knowing that I wanted to situate myself as a participant researcher, I drew heavily from action research scholarship in social studies education when designing and implementing this study (Dinkelman, 2000; Johnston, 2006; Kirkwood-Tucker, 2004; VanSledright, 2002). My rationale behind using action research was to "shine a light" on an aspect of my teaching practice which may help others in social studies education "to see more

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clearly and carefully in order to promote change" (Johnston, 2006, p. 57). As a secondary social studies methods professor, I have always been interested in those instructional practices that promote global learning amongst social studies teacher candidates. I have wondered how teacher candidates' participation in digitally mediated global learning experiences mediates and or complicates their perceptions and abilities towards planning and implementing similar projects in their social studies classrooms. The design and implementation of this research project provided me with an opportunity to explore these questions and to help contribute new knowledge to an important, underdeveloped area of study.

In this project, 26 secondary social studies teacher candidates at a large Midwestern university were partnered with students in Thailand. All teacher candidates enrolled in Instructor 1's methods course provided their informed consent to participate in this study. Table 1 shows the U.S. participants in the project.

Table 1. *U.S. Participants in the Project*

	U.S. Midwestern University
Instructor	Instructor 1 (Researcher 1): Is the Social Studies Program Coordinator and lead instructor for all secondary social studies methods courses at a large Midwestern university. With a research interest in global education and technology, he is consistently looking for ways to open up his methods classroom by having his students use technology to learn about the world, its people, and issues. t
Students	26 Pre-Service Secondary Social Studies Methods Students: All pre-service secondary social studies methods enrolled in Instructor 1's methods course volunteered to participate in this project. This course is taken by students prior to student teaching.

Purposeful sampling was used to select a teacher at an international secondary school overseas that would be willing to plan and implement a digitally mediated global learning project. At the 2012 Annual Conference of the International Assembly, I located an educator from Thailand that expressed interested in helping me recruit a secondary social studies teacher in Thailand for this project. A few weeks later, I was introduced via email to a female social studies international school teacher in Bangkok, Thailand that expressed interest in helping to plan and implement in this global learning project in her classroom. This Thai teacher's students were also included in this study (24 Thai 9th graders).

Data Sources

In this project, teacher candidates engaged in weekly communications and exchanges (asynchronous and synchronous) with Thai students, participated in class discussions and activities on governance, culture and history, and used newly gained cultural learnings to construct lesson plans for Thai

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students on American imperialism—imperialism defined as the militaristic, economic, political, and cultural influence of the United States on other countries. All pre-service teachers were randomly paired with a Thai student. Since there were more university students than Thai students, some university students doubled-up with Thai students.

At the beginning of the experience, university students and Thai students exchanged biographies using an asynchronous email client (ePals). In these biographies, students were asked to describe themselves, their families, their schools, their interests, and what they liked and disliked about their country. Students were asked to write to their "ePals" once a week on topics such as elections, current events, natural disasters, global/regional conflicts, and current events. At the beginning of the experience, U.S. and Thai students constructed a video greeting (posted online using YouTube) that introduced all of the participants and showcased each other's school. At the beginning of the experience, students completed an "anticipation guide." This guide involved all U.S. university students, as a class, initially identifying what they knew about Thailand, and all Thai students identified what they knew about the United States. During the project, all students completed a survey on U.S. power and status in the world today.

After interacting with and learning about their Thai ePals, university students were asked to construct a 50-minute lesson plan for implementation in the Thai classroom on the topic of U.S. imperialism. In particular, social studies methods students were asked to get Thai students thinking about U.S. influence in the modern world (for better and worse). After constructing and submitting their lessons, the Thai instructor selected the best lesson for implementation. A 25-minute excerpt from this implemented lesson was videotaped in the Thai classroom and shared with the pre-service social studies students. At the end of the experience, U.S. and Thai students and instructors came together via Skype to reflect on the overall digitally mediated global learning project—thinking through such questions as, "What did you learn?" and "What was your favorite/least favorite part?" and "Did your participation in this project make you want to use technology more to learn about the world and its people?" This real-time video conference was planned well in advance, as there is an 11 hour time difference between the schools. Research data sources included all student email correspondences, student survey results, student comments from the anticipation guide, student lesson plans, commentaries, and class work. Furthermore, a random selection of 6 methods students participated in a 20 minute focus group conversation on their experiences near the end of this project, and all methods students completed an online exit survey. In all, over 834 pages of data were collected over an 8 month span. Since data collected rapidly timely and consistent analysis helped sort out significant features for data reduction (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Research Findings

Drawing from the data sources listed above, this study provides insights into the questions, "In what way(s) does the participation of pre-service social studies teachers in a digitally mediated global learning project, during their methods course, shape their perceptions towards teaching the social

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studies?" and "In what ways does their participation complicate and mediate their desire and ability to plan and enact such projects in the future?"

Teacher Candidates' Perceptions towards Teaching Social Studies

Pre-service social studies methods students believed that their participation in this digitally mediated global learning project served as an authentic opportunity to learn the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential to good teaching. This includes improved understanding towards classroom assessment, the importance of getting to know individual students and their community, and teacher self-reflection. Instead of this project "adding to" an already busy methods course, university students felt as if this project enhanced and complimented core concepts in teaching and learning. This was most evident when reviewing student lesson plans, their commentaries, and during their final focus group interview:

> When I first heard about the project I was hesitant because I didn't see how emailing a student in Thailand was going to benefit me as a university student studying to be a social studies teacher. However, as we were designing our lesson plan I really found myself pulling from my email conversations with my Thai ePal. (Secondary Social Studies Focus Group)
>
> So we're supposed to put together a lesson on U.S. imperialism that your teacher will use in class. Any advice for me as I put this together? I know you said you like watching videos and political cartoons but should I know anything else? (Secondary Social Studies E-Mail Correspondence to Thai Student)
>
> After watching the implementation of our lesson plan on U.S. imperialism, it was obvious that certain parts failed. I just don't think the students had as much cultural context about the United States as we thought they had. . . . I guess if I had to do it over again I would have added some additional information at the beginning. (Secondary Social Studies Student Commentary, Reflection on Lesson Plan)

In general, methods students commented on how their participation in this project helped them gain important understandings and skills in building a strong rapport with students, understanding the profound role of culture in the learning process, and in teaching reflection and professional growth.

Social studies teachers are also expected to know about the rest of the world, its people, cultures, and issues (NCSS, 2001). However, at the beginning of the project it was clear that both U.S. university students and Thai students knew very little about each other's countries. This was quite evident during the "anticipatory guide" activity where U.S. university students were asked to identify things they knew about Thailand. Many of their comments were filled with stereotypes and misinformation. For instance, a large number of U.S. university students drew upon knowledge gained through the movie "Hangover 2" that portrayed Thailand (Bangkok in particular) as a wild, party ridden city with a vibrant criminal and sex-trade scene. Thai students as well solicited stereotypical responses and commented on how all U.S. citizens are extremely patriotic, prefer fast food, and suffer from high levels of obesity.

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Anticipation Guide

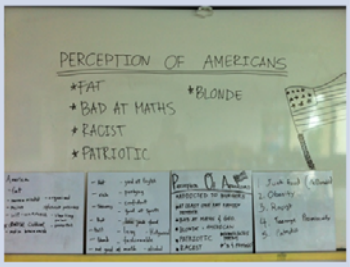
U.S. Students of Thai People	Thai Students of U.S. People
• They are socialist or communist right? • I honestly do not know much about Thailand. • There are a lot of jungles and it's always rainy. • They like to eat rice. • It's hard to be Christian there. • Hangover 2 was filmed there, and Bangkok is a wild-party ridden city. • It's a developing country that's very impoverished. • I took a class on Southeast Asia but in all honesty I forgot almost everything. • They have elephants and monkeys • There's a large criminal/sex-trade industry there. • The cities are pretty dirty, there's a lot of drug use, human trafficking, and prostitution. • They often get hit by tsunamis and are often viewed as backwards-cannibalism.	They are fat and eat too much fast food There is no such thing as "American" culture Overly egotistic They suck at math They want to own everything (materialistic) Racist Very Patriotic 

Figure 1. Comments from both sides in the Anticipation Guide

While student knowledge towards the other country was minimal at best, the majority of U.S. and Thai students demonstrated a better understanding of the other nation's history, issues, and culture(s) by the end of the semester.

> To be a good social studies teacher you need to know about what's happening in the world. Honestly, before this project I knew nothing about Thailand. In order to make conversation with my ePal, I had to seek out what was happening in the country, its form of government, and its news headlines. I really felt like I learned a lot more through actually talking to someone from the country—way more than just reading out of a textbook or taking a course. (Secondary Social Studies Student, Focus Group)

Overall, participants felt as if their participation in this digitally mediated global learning project provided them with an authentic learning opportunity to learn and apply those "essentials" in teaching and learning the social studies. Some of those essentials noted by participants included both essential pedagogical and social studies specific understandings. Important social studies specific understandings noted by methods students included knowing about people and histories outside the United States and of teachers seeking out and accessing multiple perspectives on issues. The area in which this was most noticeable was when students were asked to complete an online survey that identified their views towards the U.S. power and positionality in the world today. After reflecting on Thai students' responses and comments to this survey, U.S. methods students noted that at times they were uncomfortable with the Thai students' perceptions towards the United States and its government. As one social studies methods student commented, "I had no idea that youth overseas saw the United States and its government as greedy and evil."

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Google Form: Survey on U.S. Power

	Thai Students' Opinions	U.S. Students' Opinions
What is your opinion of the United States?	51% Favorable	87% Favorable
What is your opinion of the American people?	78% Favorable	66% Favorable
How much confidence you have in U.S. President Barack Obama to do the right thing regarding world affairs?	87% Confident	63%S Confident
I favor the US-led efforts to fight terrorism	83% Agree	74% Agree
I like American ideas about democracy	91%	83% Agree
To what extent does the U.S. Consider Thai interests	21%	39% (Somewhat and above)

Figure 2. Thai students and U.S. students' opinions on U.S. power

Important general pedagogical understandings noted by participants include the importance of strong instructional planning and assessment, the importance in getting to know individual students and their community, and of teacher self-reflection.

It should also be noted that during this project, several events occurred that triggered an awareness of how students' participation in this project provided them with an ideal opportunity to serve as cultural ambassadors for their country. In October 2012, Hurricane Sandy buried down on the United States and caused horrific damage along the northeastern coastline and great lakes region. After news struck, U.S. students were barraged with emails from sympathetic Thai students checking-in on them and their families.

> I just saw online that you guys were hit with a really bad storm. My family and I are sending our love and support to the people of the United States. When I saw this I immediately thought about you and your family. Please let me know if there's anything I or my classmates can do to help. (Thai Students' Email to Methods Student)

Soon thereafter, U.S. students reciprocated with sympathetic messages and words of support after Thailand was hit with significant rainfall and flooding in November. While U.S. students learned a great deal in regards to teaching and learning the social studies, it was also clear that bridges of understanding, friendship, and empathy grew between students of these two countries. This was evident when a secondary Thai student sent Author 1 an unsolicited email thanking him for helping to organize this opportunity:

> By participating in this project my view towards Americans have changed significantly. Most of it changed because of the conversations I had with my ePal partner. I learned that not

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> all of the people there [U.S. citizens] is (sic) racist towards Asians and knowing that makes me feel great. To an extent that makes me want to visit the United States and really see for myself how it is there.

At the end of the project, 9 out of the 26 social studies methods students planned to continue to communicate with their ePals and they had already exchanged personal email addresses to ensure clear lines of communication in the future.

Desire and Ability to Plan and Enact Digitally Mediated Global Learning Projects

Pre-service social studies methods students believed that their participation in this digitally mediated global learning project was beneficial in that it provided a model to build off of when planning their own digitally mediated global learning project. While many methods students understood the importance and theoretical significance of helping students learn about the world in social studies, some had difficulties translating this into concrete authentic global learning opportunities. Student participation in this project allowed methods students to tinker with and explore a host of digital tools (i.e., ePals, Skype, YouTube, Google Drive, etc.) for use in advancing global learning.

> I had no idea that there was a website where students could view all of the headlines from the major world newspapers. After I learned about this, I went to the Bangkok Post at least once a week to learn about what was happening. . . . I could see using this website in social studies class. (Secondary Social Studies Student, Focus Group)

Methods students commented during their reflections and in their exit focus group discussion on how their participation in this digitally mediated global learning project provided them with a "digital toolbox" of resources they could pull from in helping their future students learn about the world, its people, and issues. This digital toolbox included a host of synchronous and asynchronous technologies and platforms that teachers and students can use to advance global learning. Instead of the instructor discreetly presenting each tool separately, this project demanded that methods students frequently use and apply all of these tools to participate in the project. Instead of relying solely on one website or tool, methods students were exposed to the integration of a variety of tools to communicate and access information.

When asked in an exit survey, "Based upon your experience participating in this project, how likely are you to plan and implement a digitally based global learning project like this in the future," 92% of methods students self-identified as "very likely." One secondary social studies participant noted on an exit survey that:

> This project was very personal and getting able to know a student in an entirely different area of the world was invaluable. It really helps build a global perspective and had great benefits. I could definitely see myself setting up a pen pal activity like this when teaching social studies in the future. (Secondary Social Studies, Exit Survey)

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Overall, methods students appreciated the significant global learning and cultural exchanges that took place through their participation in this project. As one secondary social studies student commented,

> I believe that this project in methods gave us a safe space to use technology to promote a global perspective. Without this experience, we wouldn't have even known it was possible, as not too many social studies teachers do stuff like this. (Secondary Social Studies, Focus Group)

While this study provided methods students with the opportunity to use a variety of digital tools to promote global communications and interactions, it also provided university students with a venue to discuss and think through the challenges, potential "fixes", and limitations of their implementing a project like this in area schools. Methods students noted that an era of high-stakes tests, a narrow curriculum, and a lack of technological infrastructure would be significant impediments to the implementation of a project like this in PK-12 schools. This provided for meaningful discussions on the standardization movement, the digital divide, and the mounting global learning opportunity gap between schools, students, and communities. Methods students were quick to point out the limitations of this project, in that the Thai students we collaborated with were students attending an elite international school that in no way represented the bulk or majority of Thai people. In many ways, this project entailed one country's elite talking to another country's elite concerning the problems of the world. Methods students also commented on how our dependence upon English for online communication throughout this project may have impeded or warped communications with Thai students.

Implications and Future Directions

This study found that pre-service social studies methods students believed their participation in this digitally mediated global learning project served as an authentic opportunity in learning the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for good teaching. Instead of adding an additional layer to an already busy social studies curriculum, university students noted how their participation in this project provided them with an opportunity to learn and apply those essentials in teaching and learning the social studies. This included both social studies specific understandings and general best practices in instructional design. Social studies methods students felt as if they expanded their digital toolbox when looking for instructional resources, websites, and software to promote global learning. Overall, this research confirms Adler's (1991) findings that university social studies methods courses are ideal laboratories that allow teacher candidates to experiment with different instructional approaches, methods, and philosophies. This study builds on Adler's finding to include the role of the social studies methods course in serving as a safe and meaningful space for methods students to participate in *digitally mediated global learning opportunities*.

While this study supports the great potential of digital technologies in advancing global learning, I realize that such projects are still the exception rather than the rule in social studies methods courses and in PK-12 social studies education. Even though many pre-service teachers acknowledge

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their newfound willingness, desire, and ability to integrate digitally mediated global learning projects in their future classrooms, a significant number identified real and perceived challenges in the implementation of these projects. These challenges include a narrowing of the curriculum, the popularity of didactic forms of instruction to yield short term gains on standardized tests, and the lack of technological equipment and support. In this regard, this study supports an emerging body of literature that views the integration of technology in the social studies—and moreover, in global education—as a "Sleeping Giant" (Vanfossen & Waterson, 2008; Martorella, 1997). More research is needed in regard to ways in which the use of technology in the social studies advances, mediates, and complicates global education.

While this research, with all of its limitations, provides additional insights into the use of digitally mediated global learning opportunities in one pre-service social studies methods course, it also raises additional questions. These questions include, "Are any of these newly created global partnerships and friendships sustained after this semester, and if so, how does this influence teacher candidates' perception of teaching the social studies?" I'm also interested in learning if this digitally mediated global learning project was mutually beneficial for U.S. and Thai students and instructors. Or, did it simply benefit "us" more than "them"? Finally, I still cannot help think about if or how pre-service social studies students' participation in this project will influence their instructional attitudes and decisions as it relates to using technology to foster a global perspective.

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