

Elementary Teacher Candidates' Practical Reasoning:
Engaging with Case-Based Pedagogies about Sensitive Topics
in a Social Studies Methods Course

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Dedication

Once again, for David

This time for Sue and JoAnn too

To B, J and L ... be curious, be kind, and do good

To PW ... thank you

Abstract

The author investigated the characteristics of practical reasoning elementary teacher candidates demonstrated when they engaged with case-based pedagogies. Twenty-seven teacher candidates responded to a dilemma case based on a sensitive topic. The author identified three characteristics of practical reasoning using an iterative process of reading the literature and interpreting the data: emotion, cognition, and imagination. Next, the author used these characteristics to analyze the data according to two components of the practical reasoning process, making decisions and taking action, and in relation to two case-based pedagogies, written case analysis and case-based discussion. Findings suggest that combining the three characteristics of practical reasoning is indicative of stronger practical reasoning than is a singular characteristic or two-characteristic response. The findings also indicate that teacher candidates demonstrated different characteristics depending on the component of practical reasoning and the case-based pedagogy employed. The findings are considered in the context of elementary social studies teacher preparation. The author recommends using dilemma cases to address sensitive topics in an elementary social studies methods course.

Keywords: practical reasoning, case methods, dilemma cases, sensitive topics, elementary social studies teacher preparation

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*The most difficult thing is the decision to act.
The rest is merely tenacity.*
Amelia Earhart

Chapter 1

One of my assistantships during my graduate program in Social Studies Education was teaching the “Elementary Social Studies Methods” course. Although my own teaching experience was predominantly in middle school classrooms, I wholeheartedly embraced the opportunity to be an instructor in the Elementary Initial Licensure Program. I quickly came to realize the enduring value of developing elementary teacher candidates’ grasp of social studies; I needed to help them see social studies beyond their own experiences. The other realization that became very clear to me was that elementary teacher candidates needed to become confident in their teaching of social studies (Dündar, 2015), particularly due to its marginalization in elementary classrooms (Fitchett & Heafner, 2015; Fitchett, Heafner, & Lambert, 2014). Guided by my passion for social studies, I devoted myself to learning how to become a preservice teacher educator in an elementary context. An occurrence that brought pause to my practice was when teacher candidates came to class with scenarios from their practicum classrooms and asked, “What should I do?”

One time, a teacher candidate wanted to read the book *And Tango Makes Three* by Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson, a story about two male penguins at the Central Park Zoo that were given an egg by the zookeeper to hatch and raise; her cooperating teacher said that this book was not appropriate to read at

their school due to the different make-up of this penguin family. Although this teacher candidate did not read *And Tango Makes Three* during her practicum experience, she may read this text in her own classroom. Sometimes teachers choose to read uncomfortable texts with their students. This allows a teacher to create prompts to initiate a discussion as well as contemplate questions or comments that may arise based on the text presented (Bolgatz, 2005).

An example of an unexpected situation described by a teacher candidate was about a student who shared that he was absent due to hiding from the police as his dad was an undocumented worker. Her cooperating teacher talked with other school staff including the social worker regarding this student. On another occasion, a teacher candidate described a situation when a boy called another boy “gay”; she observed her cooperating teacher react to the students by addressing this word’s inappropriate usage. In both situations, the candidates, observing how their cooperating teachers responded, wondered how they might respond in their future classrooms – would they respond the same way? Differently? What is the appropriate response? Unlike intentionally addressing a difficult topic, some situations occur spontaneously, leaving teachers grappling with what they should do. I remember facing unexpected instances about difficult topics during my own classroom teaching experience, wondering what would be the right course of action to take. My actions and non-actions would affect the students involved, and others as well. I realized that I wanted a way to focus explicitly on the uncomfortable situations elementary teacher candidates

encountered in their practicum classrooms. I decided that this is what I wanted to study for my dissertation.

Problem

As humans, we face situations that demand different ways of thinking. One of the various thinking processes is reasoning. This study highlights one type of reasoning used to navigate daily life – *practical* reasoning.

Fenstermacher and Richardson (1993) contend:

All of us, nearly all of the time, may be said to employ practical reasoning; that is, we reason about our actions in relation to what we want to accomplish and what we believe to be the case about who, what and where we are. (p. 103)

Practical reasoning offers a way to understand and explain – to make sense of – a situation and any contingent actions. As a methods instructor, I encounter numerous circumstances that call for considering decisions and contemplating actions. The same rings true for the teacher candidates in their practicum classrooms. Though navigating situations is a daily occurrence, how much attention is intentionally devoted to studying practical reasoning in teacher preparation? Although some scholars have written extensively about practical reasoning (e.g., Nussbaum, 1990; Garrison, 2010), few empirical studies have examined this type of reasoning. One example is Phelan's (2009) study of practical reasoning in language arts. In the present study, I seek to fill a gap in the research related to practical reasoning in elementary *social studies* teacher

preparation.

Practical Reasoning – Making Decisions and Taking Action

Practical reasoning is a process that involves two components. First, practical reasoning entails making decisions, or exercising judgment. Normative pressures, or social norms, come into play bringing ‘ought’ into the decision-making process. Weighing alternatives and consequences also involves inner desires; this adds a layer of life experiences to making decisions – ‘ought I do this?’ Second, practical reasoning encompasses taking action, either doing something or not doing something. As with making decisions, striving for better actions also takes the values of the community into account. Taking action through a practical lens involves personal morals – ‘you had better’, which stem from society’s values or mores. The practical reasoning process embodies both collective and individual components when working toward desirable ends as a human, for other humans.

While making decisions and taking action are interconnected, in this study I look at these components of practical reasoning separately. I modified an example put forth by Josephson (2013) that differentiates these components:

Two lovebirds are sitting in a nest; one decides to fly away. How many are left?

Two – The lovebird that decided to leave might not have actually left.

Practical reasoning involves the possibility of action as part of a decision; it also helps us consider our actions and their consequences using the virtue of

goodness. *Should* one bird leave the nest? Is it *better* to stay? What is the *right* thing to do? Addressing practical reasoning in teacher preparation offers one way to help teacher candidates become, borrowing a phrase from *The Golden Bowl* (1904) by Henry James, “finely aware and richly responsible” (Nussbaum, 1990, p. 84). Central to the idea of teachers’ practical reasoning is that they are called to be mindful of and accountable for the students in their care.

Beyond Rational Thinking

Practical reasoning involves more than logic alone to arrive at an end. According to Nussbaum (1990), practical reasoning goes beyond rational thinking in three ways: (1) it seeks human good, (2) it prioritizes particulars, and (3) it acknowledges emotions and imagination (p. 55). The practical does not depend on a single measure of value. It does not rely on universal ways to respond. Practical reasoning does not focus on a predetermined end, but instead, it offers a pathway toward desirable ends. It is a helpful step to distinguish the *practical* from the *rational*.

To seek ‘human good’, one might ask: What motivates the quest for goodness? Garrison (2010) states: “If reasoning is to be good, then what we reason for – the goal, the value, the end of reasoning – must be good itself” (p. 173). Many of us can think of situations in which we sought to use good reasoning. When I was growing up, my grandfather often told my brothers and me to ‘use discretion’ in different situations we encountered. Discretion – “the quality of having or showing discernment or good judgment” (discretion, n.d.) – is

a component of practical reasoning. My grandfather asked us to make ‘good’ decisions when we worked with tools to build swings for our teddy bears or when we considered whether or not to eat my grandma’s chocolate chip cookies before dinner. Through these and other instances, my grandfather’s words taught me to stop and think about what I should do. Striving for good, or desirable, ends when making decisions makes practical reasoning challenging.

How does ‘prioritizing particulars’ make the practical stand apart from the rational? Practical reasoning is more than means-to-end reasoning which implies a right answer. To determine an appropriate response for a situation, one must prioritize particulars; Pendlebury (1990) refers to this as “constituents-to-end reasoning” (p. 174). By linking a judgment to a constituent (appropriate thing for a particular person or situation), one is better able to respond to multiple factors and complexities at hand. To prioritize particulars, one must grasp the uniqueness of a situation: “doing the right thing in the right way at the right time in response to problems posed by particular people, in particular places, on particular occasions” (Garrison, 2010, p. 171). An example of this is when my three children know that only one Popsicle remains in the freezer on a hot day. Looking at my children and weighing their reasons for getting the Popsicle involves accepting that there is no universal rule that applies in all cases. I need to focus on the particulars. For example, which child is most in need of a Popsicle as a source of refreshment or as a special treat? Dunne (1993) describes this as the “attunement of universal knowledge and techniques to the

particular occasion” (p. 368). Prioritizing the particulars over the end result makes practical reasoning contextual.

Both Aristotle and John Dewey provide insights into Nussbaum’s third difference between rational and practical reasoning – the presence of ‘emotions and imagination.’ Nussbaum (1990), who interpreted Aristotle’s views, writes: “Practical insight will cultivate emotional openness and responsiveness in approaching new situations” (p. 79). Garrison (2010), who elucidated Dewey’s thoughts, writes: “Imagination is the greatest instrument of the good” (p. 171). Technical judgment alone is not enough to resolve situations; tapping into emotions and imagination will allow a space for compassion and creativity to come into play when taking action. For example, when the time came to euthanize my dog, I considered many options to find a good fit for both Annie (my dog) and me. After a visit from a veterinarian friend and an online search, someone came to my home to put Annie down. I opened my heart to a possibility that involved risk, as I did not know what to expect, to do something good for Annie (and me). Acknowledging emotions and imagination to take action make practical reasoning complex.

My personal examples illustrate everyday dilemmas in which exercising practical reasoning could make better ends possible. These incidences also highlight my desire to do the ‘right’ thing – not in the sense of being ‘correct,’ but in doing ‘good.’ While ‘practical’ is often used synonymously with ‘sensible,’ in the context of my research ‘practical’ denotes what is ‘appropriate’ instead of what is

'realistic' or 'utilitarian.' In this study, I seek to illustrate the need for elementary teacher candidates to go beyond rational reasoning when they encounter difficult classroom situations and strive for goodness.

Practical Reasoning in Teacher Preparation

Practical reasoning needs attention in licensure programs so that future teachers can be better prepared to make decisions and take action. This is particularly important for elementary teachers who often have close contact with families regarding the decisions and actions of students. Practical reasoning strives for goodness; this invokes a moral responsibility to do the right thing. Stengel (2013) contends, "Responsibility, moral and professional, can be cultivated in the development of the practical judgment teachers cannot avoid" (p. 45). Teacher educators can provide time and space in methods courses for teacher candidates to use the lens of practical reasoning to recognize what making 'good' decisions looks like. Teacher candidates also need an awareness of what taking 'right' actions may entail. Navigating authentic classroom situations in teacher preparation may help teacher candidates cope with the uncertainty that often accompanies making decisions and taking action, particularly as novice practitioners. This experience may begin to position uncertainty as fruitful instead of fearful and lead teacher candidates to be open to the possibility of taking risks and the vulnerability of learning from mistakes. While responsibility is critical, I seek to highlight uncertainty in the context of elementary social studies teacher preparation.

Case Methods in Teacher Preparation

One way to provide opportunities for teacher candidates to explore classroom situations is through case methods, or case-based pedagogies. Sato and Rogers (2010) define cases as “narratives drawn from real-life instances and used as teaching tools to catalyze group discussion and individual reflection” (p. 592). Case methods can provide teacher candidates with the time and space to interact with real world teaching dilemmas. Sykes and Byrd (1992) describe case methods as a means to provide practice with skills such as “interpreting situations, framing problems, generating various solutions to the problems posed, and choosing among them” (p. 482). Case methods can also be used to examine instances of practical reasoning. Skills used in examining cases correspond to the decision-making component of practical reasoning. For the taking action part, case methods allow teacher candidates to “... formulate plans of action for a particular situation” (Sato & Rogers, 2010, p. 596). Case-based pedagogies may be used to engage teacher candidates with making decisions and taking action.

Cases are different from scenarios or vignettes, which are also used in methods coursework. While there is variation in their uses and definitions, scenarios and vignettes are mostly used in the literature to describe narratives that are shorter in length than case narratives. This study employs one specific type of case – *dilemma cases*. Dilemma cases refer to narratives containing unexpected circumstances for which multiple possibilities for making decisions

and taking action exist. Dilemma cases provide a pathway for teacher candidates to exercise practical reasoning in a variety of situations. Teacher educators need a greater awareness of possibilities for utilizing case-based pedagogies so that teacher candidates can build experience from which to draw during their teaching practice.

Sensitive Topics in Teacher Preparation

My study employs case narratives in an elementary social studies methods course; as such, the content of the dilemma case read and discussed by teacher candidates is from the field of social studies. The instances described in the introduction to this chapter all fall into one category – sensitive topics. Sensitive topics invoke differences of opinion and multiple perspectives on matters including, but not limited to, sexual orientation, race, and religion. These topics are a vital piece of social studies education (Adler, 2008). These and other topics may be uncomfortable for teachers to address in classrooms, but are vital to the teaching of children. Moore and Deshaies (2012) state: “Many times these topics are crucially important to students’ awareness of the world and its social, moral, political and civic underpinnings. Students deserve to be taught about these topics in authentic, engaging and purposeful ways” (p. 1). Social studies concepts and ideas are inherent in many sensitive topics that arise with elementary students. Addressing sensitive topics in an elementary social studies methods course makes a direct connection to situations elementary teacher candidates encounter in their placement classrooms.

Sensitive topics are context-based in that what may be a sensitive topic in one context may not be as sensitive in another context. I found no formal definition of sensitive topics in the literature, but scholars have developed lists of topics that tend to be sensitive in multiple contexts. For example, in a study of secondary social studies teacher candidates' perceptions about taboo issues, Evans, Avery, and Pederson (1999) found that “many of the most sensitive topics cluster around sex, race, and religion, areas of historical cultural conflict and taboo” (p. 220). Lyman (2012) describes sensitive topics as “those life issues that are usually avoided in early elementary school and by our society at large – sex, death, homosexuality, drugs” (p. 122). Sensitive topics have been referred to as ‘tender topics’ in early childhood literature (Mankiw & Strasser, 2013) and as ‘hot moments’ (Warren, 2002) in post-secondary education. I found ‘sensitive topics’ used as the ‘umbrella’ term in K-12 literature encompassing various contexts.

Sensitive topics may involve controversial issues, but there is a distinction between the two concepts. Controversial issues have two or more sides. According to Hess (2009), these issues are authentic and “likely to generate multiple and competing answers” (p. 5). While some sensitive topics may have two or more sides, this is not how they are positioned in my study. I consider sensitive topics as those that may be uncomfortable or difficult to address, such as death; these and other topics are not necessarily divisive or contentious. Sensitive topics invoke multiple perspectives and may elicit emotions or trigger

trauma. Sensitive topics are related to teachable moments, particularly as they often arise unexpectedly. In this study, sensitive topics are put forth in the context of situations that demand care, thought, and vision to address. Since sensitive topics comprise a crucial piece of social studies education, it is worthwhile for elementary social studies methods instructors to know about ways to bring these topics into their courses.

Research Questions

The goal of my dissertation study is to offer insights into elementary teacher candidates' practical reasoning about sensitive dilemma cases. The research questions guiding my inquiry are:

1. What are the characteristics of practical reasoning demonstrated by elementary teacher candidates when they engage in written case analysis related to a sensitive topic?
2. What are the characteristics of practical reasoning demonstrated by elementary teacher candidates when they engage in case-based discussion regarding a sensitive topic?

The context of this study is an elementary social studies methods course at a Midwestern research university. My study will present a description of these teacher candidates' practical reasoning in response to a dilemma case regarding a sensitive topic; teacher candidates first responded independently in writing and then responded collectively in a large group discussion.

The significance of my research is three-fold: (1) it will yield insights into the characteristics of practical reasoning demonstrated by elementary teacher candidates, (2) it will provide a rationale for using case-based pedagogies to engage elementary teacher candidates in practical reasoning, and (3) it will illustrate one way that methods instructors can use dilemma cases to address sensitive topics with elementary teacher candidates. Schools and classrooms are spaces where teacher candidates are constantly confronted with sensitive topics and where they observe school personnel using various approaches in dealing with sensitive topics. More often than not, teacher candidates are ill-prepared to confront situations that involve sensitive topics. As such, the need to address these situations in the methods class is vital. The alternative of *not* confronting sensitive topics in methods courses places teacher candidates in complex situations without previous practice with reasoning through these challenging, contextual, and complex instances. My ultimate aim is to help elementary teacher educators bring attention to practical reasoning through the use of dilemma cases regarding sensitive topics, thus supporting future teachers when they inevitably need to navigate uncomfortable and sensitive situations on their own.

Highlighting practical reasoning in education coursework may allow teacher candidates to realize the complexity of attending to and acting in the situation at hand. Wasserman (1994) wrote:

Given the real world of teaching, the best that teachers can hope for is to possess the tools that will allow them to perceive dilemmas with intelligence and sensitivity and to make thoughtful, informed decisions that guide teaching actions. These tools include the ability to use knowledge to make meaning of what is happening, the ability to make teaching decisions that are appropriate to the meanings being made, the ability to trust themselves to take the risks of action, and the ability to make evaluative judgments about the effectiveness of their decisions. (p. 604)

Research on the role of case-based pedagogies in conjunction with practical reasoning can offer one way to help candidates cope with the uncertainties of daily classroom teaching.

Overview of the Remaining Chapters

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework and reviews the literature related to three areas: practical reasoning, case methods, and sensitive topics. Chapter 3 explains this study's design and methods and lays out the analytic framework. Chapter 4 describes the practical reasoning characteristics demonstrated by the elementary teacher candidates and reports their prevalence. Chapter 5 discusses the findings and suggests implications for this study.

As my sufferings mounted I soon realized that there were two ways in which I could respond to my situation - either to react with bitterness or seek to transform the suffering into a creative force. I decided to follow the latter course.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

Practical reasoning, practical wisdom, or *phronesis* according to the Greeks, strives for goodness. According to Garrison (2010), “Practical wisdom requires insight into those possibilities that ought to exist if we are all to live the good life” (p. 78). The desire for goodness plays out in our everyday lives. How do we know what we should do? When we encounter a situation, we first must interpret what is happening. This thinking involves our experience, our desires, and our moral responsibility. The question of “good for whom?” varies with each situation. We need to know what is ‘good’ in the situation before us. Once we interpret a situation, we can contemplate our response. How do we decide what to do? Brickhouse, Stanley, and Whitson (1993) emphasize that practical reasoning makes use of values when determining what to do. The desire for doing ‘good’ is driven by both inner and external values. We must look at our responsibility to do ‘good’ in the situation at hand; we also need to examine our habits and how we tend to respond. Practical reasoning involves action (Dunne, 1993; Stengel, 2013). How do we learn to adapt our actions when striving for goodness? We consider our capacity to respond with the aim of goodness. By analyzing our practice over time, we can begin to see the consequences of our

actions as well as possibilities for action beyond our habits. Only then can we move toward a conviction for enacting *phronesis* in our lives.

I am now going to shift from describing practical reasoning related to everyday life to focusing on practical reasoning in the educational realm. Phelan (2009) investigated practical reasoning within the discipline of language arts; her work plays a central role in my investigation of practical reasoning in teacher preparation. Phelan adopts language to describe practical reasoning that resonates with my thinking: “Practical reasoning ... refers to teachers’ capacity to discern particulars and make judgments about how to act in different situations and contexts” (p. 96). Figure 1 situates Phelan’s description of the practical reasoning process for teachers within the general processes of reasoning—perception, deliberation, and response.

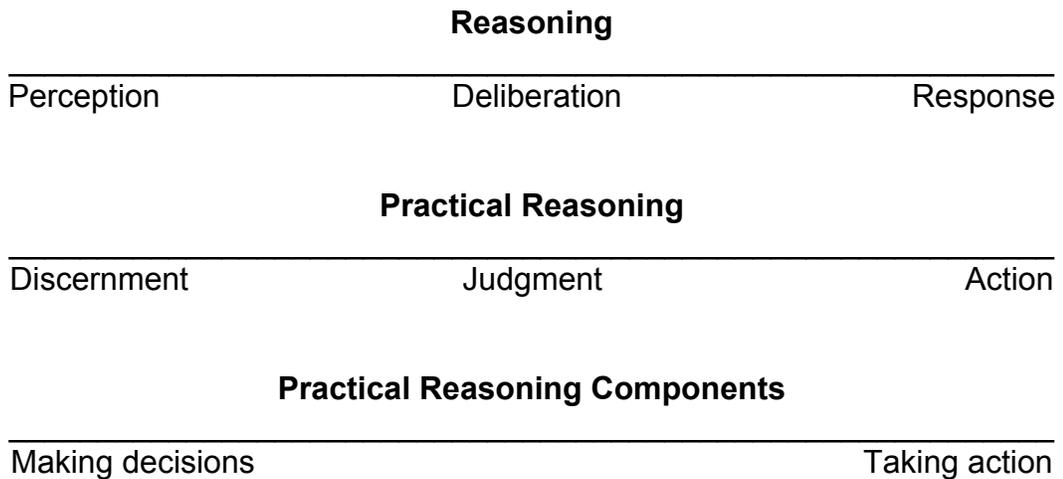


Figure 1. Reasoning, practical reasoning, and practical reasoning components. ‘Practical Reasoning’ from Phelan (2009).

In this study, I merge Phelan's (2009) three-part description of practical reasoning into two components: making decisions and taking action. These components provide a structure within which I examine practical reasoning.

Practical Reasoning in the Educational Realm

The general reasoning process provides a familiar framework in which to position Phelan's (2009) description of practical reasoning in the context of teacher preparation. Each of the next three subsections portrays an aspect of the general reasoning process from the literature I reviewed for this study followed by an explanation of practical reasoning that aligns with Phelan (discernment, judgment, and action).

Perceiving and discerning. The general practice of perception is addressed in the literature related to practical reasoning. Perception "allows us to see what we can and should do here and now" (Garrison, 2010, p. 172). Classroom interactions often require a teacher to attend to details when contemplating appropriate action. "But it is important that she do *nothing*, that she make no response, until she has first asked herself 'What is going on here?' This is the interpretive question" (Stengel, 2013, p. 48). Teacher candidates need opportunities to stop and see the situation before them. Interpretation is embedded in perception – in this study's context, reading the circumstances of a dilemma case. This first step of general reasoning is critical to understanding a situation as unique.

Phelan's (2009) account of practical reasoning puts forth discernment as the first part of this specific type of reasoning. What does discernment look like? Pendlebury (1993) states: "At its best, practical reasoning is sensitive to all the inconvenient complications, to the particulars of human lives and stories, and to the competing demands of practice. This is precisely what discernment consists of" (p. 150). In elementary classrooms, teacher candidates need to be aware of the particulars – the details, intricacies, subtleties – within complicated situations; this includes but is not limited to students, daily classroom interactions, and current issues ranging from local to global. One 'particular' that is relevant even though it is not physically present in the elementary classroom is the family; the home life of elementary students plays an intricate role in their lives at school. According to Pendlebury's description of discernment, teacher candidates also must be perceptive to "competing demands of practice" (p. 150) including but not limited to individual, collective, and/or school-wide considerations. For example, the teacher confronting the situation referenced in Chapter 1, recounting the student being absent due to the immigration status of his father, poses multiple concerns that may be at odds with one another. This teacher must be sensitive to the child, his family, and the school's policies to name a few. Practical reasoning offers a framework that can support teacher candidates to discern the particulars of day-to-day classroom situations involving students' lives.

In the present study, I position discernment as part of the decision-making component of practical reasoning. I explain how this relates to the present study following my explanation of deliberation.

Deliberating and making judgments. Deliberation is an aspect of reasoning highlighted in the literature I reviewed for this study. According to Dunne and Pendlebury (2003): “Practical deliberation in teaching is not accessible to a set of general rules governing a procedure for selecting the most effective means to a neat and easily specifiable end” (p. 210); one must go beyond rules of usual deliberation (Phelan, 2005). For practical reasoning, goodness must be present during a deliberative process that seeks *ends*. The skills of weighing options and making decisions are particularly relevant in teacher preparation because teacher candidates need to choose among conflicting possibilities that often exist in classroom dilemmas. Going beyond conventional procedures when weighing decisions may be necessary when striving for the goodness required by *phronesis*.

Phelan (2009) describes the second piece of practical reasoning as “teachers’ capacity ... to make judgments” (p. 96). According to Heilbronn (2008), “Judgment is the capacity to initiate a response which is ‘fit for purpose’, the right thing to do or to refrain from doing in the lived moment” (p. 105). Judgment involves finding an appropriate response and then deciding whether or not to enact it. For example, the teacher facing the situation referenced in Chapter 1 regarding a boy calling another boy “gay” calls for a judgment. This

teacher must seek goodness when deciding what, if anything, to do. As novices, teacher candidates may not possess experience to fall back on or models of goodness to take into account when making judgments. Practical reasoning offers a framework that can support teacher candidates when making judgments that helps them overcome their uncertainty when striving for goodness.

One of the aims of my study is to reveal the characteristics of practical reasoning present when elementary teacher candidates make decisions about a classroom dilemma. In this study, I merge discernment and making judgments into one component of practical reasoning – decision making.

Responding and taking action. The response to a situation is the culmination of the reasoning process; responding, or taking action, is encompassed in the literature related to practical reasoning. Heilbronn (2008) contends, “It is through the exercise of judgment that appropriate action can be skillfully directed in any particular, contingent moment” (p. 93). Practical reasoning can help teacher candidates take *right* actions by asking them to enact their decisions, or not, following their recognition of a situation’s context and complexity.

Phelan describes the third part of practical reasoning as “how to act in different situations and contexts” (p. 96). Each classroom situation along with the overarching context must be considered when responding because the results of actions and non-actions affect the students involved, and others as well. For example, the situation involving the student’s use of “gay” to refer to a peer not

only affects these two students, but also the classmates who witnessed the interaction. This teacher must situate his actions within the class norms and the school and/or district policies. The teacher also needs to take the needs of the individual students into account by drawing on both the big picture and the particulars of this situation. Practical reasoning offers a framework that can support teacher candidates when contemplating action in each unique situation and context.

I seek to illustrate what taking action looks like in an elementary social studies methods course. A second aim of this study is to uncover the characteristics of practical reasoning present when teacher candidates contemplate action in response to a sensitive topic.

Summary

The theoretical framework upon which this study is based can be summarized as follows: Goodness is present when deciding on and doing the right thing (Phelan, 2001). The integrated nature of practical reasoning involves perception, deliberation, and response, or according to Phelan (2009), discernment, making judgment(s), and acting. These processes ebb and flow during reasoning. In the present study, I utilize two components of practical reasoning, making decisions and taking action, because they signify the ongoing, cyclical nature of classroom situations. I also draw attention to the need to strive for appropriate responses, decisions and actions that attend to the students' education.

Review of the Literature

The review of literature includes sections on practical reasoning, case-based pedagogies, and sensitive topics. These bodies of research are presented individually and also in combination with one another. I highlight empirical studies completed in teacher preparation (licensure programs training teacher candidates). While most of these studies are situated in elementary contexts, it is noteworthy that none of them have been conducted in elementary social studies teacher preparation programs.

Practical Reasoning in Teacher Preparation

Focusing on practical reasoning is a valuable area of study in teacher preparation because classroom situations involve circumstances for which there are competing possibilities for making decisions and taking action. “There is more than one available course of action and the individual teacher makes a choice of what she considers the right action in the circumstances” (Heilbronn, 2008, p. 95). Practical reasoning involves both means and ends. The means “mediate between where we are and where we want to be” (Garrison, 2010, p. 88); the “ends are the states of affairs we desire” (Harrington & Garrison, 1992, p. 716). Practical reasoning is also described as “constituent-to-ends” reasoning (Pendlebury, 1990). Constituents-to-end reasoning is concerned with what ought to be done in a hard case – a situation that falls outside of the expected (p. 175). I found few studies on the subject of practical reasoning in education. Two studies (Feldman, 2000; Kern, 2007) investigated novice and/or practicing

teachers related to teaching science. Feldman looked at secondary teachers' decision making related to conceptual change. Kern's dissertation presented case studies of secondary teachers' actions in relation to practical reasoning. The study outlined below offers one way that practical reasoning has been addressed in teacher preparation.

Empirical study. Phelan's (2009) case study of a secondary language arts teacher candidate reports how the intellectual virtues of a discipline can influence practical reasoning. Phelan asks: "What is the relationship between a prospective teacher's discipline and his or her capacity to see the significance of a pedagogical situation, to imagine various possibilities for action, and to judge how he ought to act in that situation?" (p. 95). Phelan concluded that teacher educators must attend to the complex ways in which a prospective teacher's prior knowledge may influence their "orientations to experience, their consideration of educational ends, and, finally, their characters" (p. 93). This teacher candidate's background in language arts interacted with his student teaching context as he made decisions about how to teach writing to a group of secondary students. This study is significant as it uses empirical data to illustrate what practical reasoning looks like in teacher preparation.

Case Methods in Teacher Preparation

As previously mentioned, Sato and Rogers (2010) define cases as "narratives drawn from real-life instances and used as teaching tools to catalyze group discussion and individual reflection" (p. 592). According to Levin (1995),

“Cases represent the problems, dilemmas, and complexity of teaching something to someone in some context. *Case method* is the practice of using cases as a pedagogical tool in fields such as law, business, medicine, and education” (para. 2). In this study I employ one specific type of case – *dilemma case*; this type of narrative contains circumstances for which multiple possibilities for making decisions and taking action exist.

In the mid-1980s, Lee Shulman was pivotal in bringing case methods to the forefront in teacher education (Sato & Rogers, 2010). A decade later, Merseth (1996) synthesized existing literature and offered teacher educators three purposes for employing cases: (1) to provide cases as exemplars, (2) to use cases as opportunities to practice analysis and contemplate action, (3) and to offer cases as stimulants to personal reflection (p. 728). My study focuses on the second purpose because I want teacher candidates to grapple with situations for which there are no ‘right’ answers (Harrington, Quinn-Leering, & Hodson, 1996) in the hope that this will reveal to them the complexities and contextual bases of teaching (Harrington & Garrison, 1992).

As a teaching tool, the case method may be employed in multiple ways. One way to enact this pedagogy is through written case analysis. In this study, teacher candidates were presented with a written narrative and a set of prompts to which they responded in writing. Another case-based pedagogy is to facilitate a case-based discussion with a group or class of teacher candidates; this method involves a structured conversation regarding a case narrative. A third way to use

case methods in teacher preparation is for teacher candidates to write their own cases about an assigned topic or a topic of choice. The available research based on teacher candidates' writing of cases (e.g., Levin, 2002; Whitcomb, 2002; Yoon & Kim, 2010) will not be described; although teacher candidates in the present study composed dilemma cases as a course assignment, their narratives are not included in this study's analyses. Following are examples of research studies that use the two case-based pedagogies I examine in this study: written case analysis and case-based discussions.

Empirical studies on case-based pedagogies. Some scholars employed written case analysis when studying case methods in teacher preparation coursework. Harrington (1995), Harrington, Quinn-Leering, and Hodson (1996), and Koc (2012) presented teacher candidates with dilemma cases and then analyzed the candidates' written responses. Harrington (1995) studied 26 elementary teacher candidates' reasoning and concluded that cases provide insight into the development of prospective teachers' professional decision making. In their study of 21 elementary teacher candidates, Harrington, Quinn-Leering, and Hodson (1996) found that written case analysis has potential to gauge the development of critical reflection. Koc (2012) used a dilemma case with 48 early childhood teacher candidates to investigate their abilities to make theory–practice connections and solve problems. His findings suggest that the dilemma case provided an opportunity for teacher candidates to bridge theory and practice and to develop effective solutions to dilemmas.

Moje and Wade (1997) focused exclusively on case-based discussions in a study that involved teacher candidates. They examined 30 preservice teachers' and 10 practicing teachers' thinking using case-based discussions and found that carefully crafted discussions have potential to foster reflection and exploration of issues.

I located two studies that report on using written case analysis along with case discussions: Lundeberg and Fawver (1994) and Levin (1995). Lundeberg and Fawver studied 40 secondary teacher candidates' cognitive growth by analyzing their writing and engaging them in case discussions throughout an education foundations course and found a significant change in cognitive growth (i.e., flexibility, perspective-taking, and connectedness). Levin's (1995) study of 24 elementary teachers (8 teacher candidates, 8 beginning teachers, and 8 experienced teachers) examined their written case analyses before and after a case discussion. An experimental group followed written analysis with a discussion of the case; the control group did not engage in a case discussion. Levin found that case-based discussions have potential to develop teacher thinking, particularly for teacher candidates and beginning teachers.

Practical Reasoning and Case Methods

Key scholars in the areas of practical reasoning and case methods describe these topics in similar ways. When focusing on these topics as processes, common language is used to illustrate the active nature of engaging

in practical reasoning and engaging *with* case methods. Table 1 shows the alignment of scholars' language.

Table 1

Alignment of Scholar's Language for Practical Reasoning and Case Methods

Practical Reasoning			Case Methods		
Stengel (2013)	Phelan (2009)	Nussbaum (1990)	Sykes & Byrd (1992)	Wasserman (1994)	Harrington (1995)
Interpret the evidence	Discern particulars	Grapple with details	Interpret situations and frame problems	Discern essential elements in a situation	(See) competing often equally valid solutions
Determine potential responses	Make judgments	Respond to what is there	Generate various solutions to problems posed	Analyze and interpret data	Evaluate evidence for judging alternative interpretations and actions
Determine actual responses	Act in different situations and contexts	Make a good decision	Choose among them	Use data to inform action	Understand and accept tentativeness in knowing, with certainty, what action to take
p. 55	p. 96	p. 69	p. 482	p. 606	p. 204

Note in Table 1 how I aligned specific descriptions of the practical reasoning process with explanations of using case-based pedagogies. The connections between these two areas are highlighted by the analogous verbs and parallel nature of the scholars' language.

In my review of the literature, I found one study that connects the 'practical' with case methods. Lee's (2003) dissertation titled, "Portrait of Preservice and Experienced Teachers' Practical Knowledge about Diversity through Case-based Pedagogy," uses social constructivism as the theoretical framework. Lee investigated the development of teacher candidates' (and practicing teachers') practical *knowledge* using case-based pedagogy in the context of early childhood teacher education. Her findings indicate that participants confirm or challenge their knowledge and beliefs about diversity through the use of cases (p. xx).

Sensitive Topics in Elementary Classrooms

Sensitive topics, prevalent in Pre-K-12 classrooms, are essential components of social studies education: "Civic competence requires dealing with complex and controversial issues" (Adler, 2008, p. 344). Social studies is about people; this discipline offers an ideal environment for taking on the complexity of human lives. Significant social studies concepts (e.g., time, place) and disciplinary skills (e.g., inquiry, critical thinking) can be addressed with children at school. The following review of literature focuses on sensitive topics in elementary classrooms.

Bickmore (1999) states: "If we want children to be safe in the long run, and if we want them to learn, then the risky road of facing conflict and sensitive issues must be taken" (p. 21). Rationales for teaching elementary students about specific sensitive topics have been offered related to race (Bolgatz, 1995),

same-sex orientation (Colleary, 1999), gender diversity (Ryan, Patraw, & Bednar, 2013) and war (Suzuki, Huss, Fiehn, & Spencer, 2015). Although researchers encourage teachers to tackle sensitive topics, practitioners may avoid them because addressing sensitive topics poses multidimensional challenges for elementary educators. For example, James (2008) describes how elementary teacher candidates must navigate the desire to protect and nurture with the opportunity for children to be aware of and interpret the world for themselves. Suzuki et al. (2015) concur: "While many adults instinctively wish to shelter children from the harsh realities of life, our research confirmed our belief that realistically written literature on difficult topics helps children" (p. 57). Teachers are also in a position of weighing their own concerns (e.g. parental reprisals) with the potential benefits for students. Addressing sensitive topics in elementary classrooms may support students' understanding of themselves and/or others.

A few strategies exist for addressing sensitive topics with elementary students. Using picture books to facilitate learning about sensitive topics is a common strategy put forth in Pre-K (Mankiw & Strasser, 2013) and elementary (Bowen, 2007; Lowe, 2009) contexts. Planned discussions of sensitive topics are another classroom strategy suggested for elementary classrooms (Hendricks, Jee, & Robbins, 2014; Sutterby, 2015).

The research cited thus far focuses on planned teaching of sensitive topics in elementary classrooms. However, my study focuses on instances when sensitive topics arise spontaneously. Unexpected situations that surface in daily

classroom life often pose the most challenging dilemmas for educators. In my review of the literature, I did not find any research related to responding to sensitive topics that tend to occur naturally in elementary classrooms, that is outside of teachers' planned instructional activities.

Cultural and political vignettes. Darvin (2011) studied sensitive issues in a literacy course with practicing elementary teachers. She employed cultural and political vignettes (CPVs), a pedagogy that presents situations in a written format and then in a performance. Her study investigates the influence that engaging with CPVs had on practicing teachers' ability to deal with culturally and politically sensitive issues in elementary classrooms. Darvin's findings suggest that using CPVs provided a supportive space to interrogate issues that may not be addressed in teacher education coursework. Darvin's use of CPVs is similar to how the present study employed dilemma cases to address sensitive topics.

Practical Reasoning, Case Methods, and Sensitive Topics

Sensitive topics can be posed as dilemma cases, and the exploration of dilemma cases is strongly connected to practical reasoning. Thus, providing space in elementary social studies methods courses to engage with dilemmas seems to hold great potential. Brickhouse, Stanley and Whitson (1993) suggest:

Teachers can model practical reasoning in their teaching by working through problems for which they do not have a predetermined answer for their students. Problems involving the environment, health, intelligence,

sexuality, and technology, among others, all might serve this purpose. (p. 372)

Social studies offers an ideal context for employing practical reasoning because this reasoning process highlights complexity, and sensitive topics are inherently complex. Dilemma cases regarding sensitive topics offer teacher candidates practice with picking out the nuances within one situation and seeing the differences between situations to inform making decisions and taking action in difficult circumstances. Harrington (1995) states:

Using dilemma-based cases in preservice programs helps students begin to understand and accept the tentativeness in knowing, with certainty, what action to take; provides opportunities to marshal and evaluate evidence for judging alternative interpretations and actions; and can illuminate the moral dimensions of teaching. (p. 204)

This description of employing dilemma cases aligns extremely well with the practical reasoning process.

One key factor to consider during the practical reasoning process is time. An awareness of the complexities at hand may help teacher candidates slow their judgment and choose a better alternative when responding to sensitive situations. Taking time to pause whenever possible allows for multiple layers to bubble to the surface. Due to the complex nature of classrooms, sometimes a pause is a matter of seconds while other times it may be a few hours or even days. In any case, time is needed to help determine the right thing to do.

Wasserman (1994) addresses this idea of slowed judgment using case-based pedagogies:

Students who study educational issues through case narratives learn to envision teaching as a series of complex situations that are in a constant state of flux. They learn how to draw out meanings and to free themselves from unwarranted assumptions, from sweeping generalizations, and from facile conclusions. They learn how we all filter what we see and hear through our own built-in lenses of personal reference. They learn to become more critical, more thoughtful, more intelligent meaning makers, exchanging simplistic judgments for suspended judgment. (p. 604)

This quote highlights the possibility of moving beyond the simple to the complex. Initial responses may be rushed resulting in superficial decisions and/or actions. Suspending judgment to a later time may help teacher candidates see the complexity within a situation, thus allowing for a more fitting response.

Time is also needed to employ case-based pedagogies. “Using case methods in teacher education is time intensive and may place limits on curriculum coverage in teacher preparation programs” (Sato & Rodgers, 2010, p. 596). Elementary social studies methods instructors need to assess the inclusion of dilemma cases into their instruction. Although case-based pedagogies are time consuming, the studies cited in this chapter show the benefits of such pedagogies for teacher candidates as they prepare for the real

world of classroom teaching. Case method pedagogies offer teacher educators multiple pathways to best support the needs of the teacher candidates to make decisions and take action under the umbrella of goodness.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the theoretical framework of practical reasoning and the literature related to case methods and sensitive topics within the context of teacher education. Drawing from this work, my inquiry focuses on teacher candidates' decisions and actions regarding a dilemma case based on a sensitive topic. Intentionally tackling sensitive topics in the methods classroom can provide teacher candidates with insights into coping with uncertainty and complexity in different classroom contexts. The vital matters described in this chapter have been overlooked in elementary social studies teacher preparation.

As a first year teacher, I would pay close attention to all my students and make sure I had strong relationships with my families. Hopefully this would open up discussions with them and create an honest environment. I would talk to my principal about what options are available to me, and I would use my best judgment when making decisions.

Teacher Candidate, 2014

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to offer insights into elementary teacher candidates' practical reasoning when presented with a dilemma case in a social studies methods course. Did the teacher candidates reason about a difficult classroom situation in practical ways? If so, in what ways did their words demonstrate the characteristics of practical reasoning? This chapter presents the methodology of my dissertation study. To start, I describe the design of the study along with the setting, participants, and curricular context. Next, I outline the data collection and data analysis methods, including the function of my pilot study. I then review practical reasoning and explain the procedures I used to analyze the data. Finally, I acknowledge my role as researcher.

Research Design

This study is conducted as a qualitative inquiry. It relies on participants' views, broad questions, and word-based data (Creswell, 2008). In this study, I seek to understand the complex world of lived reality with concern "for grasping the actor's definition of a situation" (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118). To learn about the world of human action, Schwandt offers two approaches to a 'human' inquiry:

constructivist and *interpretivist*. I approached my investigation with the latter interpretivist perspective in order to understand the meanings embodied in teacher candidates' responses. As the reader of the teacher candidates' words, my understanding most closely aligns with one way of interpretivist thinking described by Schwandt – *ontological hermeneutics*. As a researcher, my goal is to produce meanings from multiple iterations and interpretations of the data. In this study, my interpretations attempt to understand the teacher candidates' reasoning about a dilemma case. How did the teacher candidates define a particular situation and how did they see themselves as actors in this situation? As the researcher in this study, I offer my understanding of 27 teacher candidates' interpretations of a real world classroom dilemma. Figure 2 illustrates the position I adopted in this qualitative inquiry.

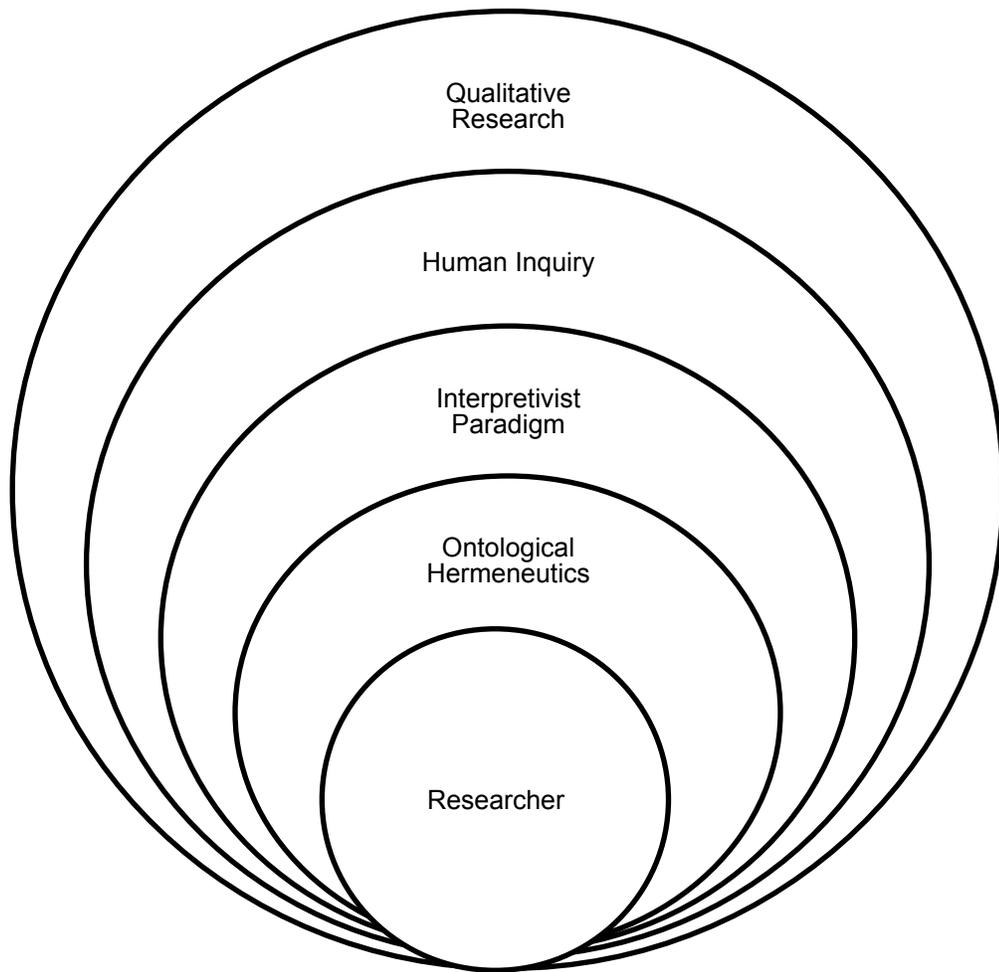


Figure 2. Researcher positionality within this qualitative inquiry. This figure illustrates the approaches (Creswell, 2008; Schwandt, 1994) that informed my investigation.

Setting and Participants

I conducted my study in an elementary social studies methods course during spring semester of 2014. This course is a required component of a post-baccalaureate elementary initial licensure program at a large public university in the Midwest. The social studies methods course is taken during the semester

prior to student teaching. During this semester, six methods courses and the concurrent practicum occur in a block schedule format; the teacher candidates alternate between two weeks on campus in courses and two weeks in the field in their placement classrooms.

All 27 elementary teacher candidates in the course, or cohort, gave their consent to participate in my dissertation study. Table 2 shows how the participants identified themselves.

Table 2

Participant Self-Disclosure of Demographics

Participant Demographics			
<u>Age</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Placement Grade</u>
20-24 <i>n</i> = 25	Female <i>n</i> = 27	White/ Caucasian <i>n</i> = 24	K <i>n</i> = 2
25-29 <i>n</i> = 2	Male <i>n</i> = 0	Black <i>n</i> = 1	1-3 <i>n</i> = 19
		Asian <i>n</i> = 1	4-5 <i>n</i> = 6

Note. One teacher candidate started to write “Cau”, but erased it and left this line blank.

The participants were entirely female with the majority “White/Caucasian,” under 25 years old, and identified themselves as being placed in primary classrooms.

Curricular Context

Teacher candidates study a wide variety of topics in the elementary social studies methods course. Table 3 outlines the course sessions.

Table 3

Social Studies Methods Course Sessions, Spring 2014

<u>Day</u>	<u>Session Title</u>
1	What is Social Studies?
2	Curriculum and Standards
3	Concepts and Cultural Universals
4	Economics: Needs, Wants, Goods, and Services
5	Civics: Democracy
6	Geography: People and Places and Case Analysis
7	History: Time, Continuity, and Change
8	Historical Inquiry Lesson Planning
9	Service Learning and Dilemma Cases
10	Social Studies Review and Assessment
11	Unit Planning and Case Discussion
12	Technology Integration and Topics of Choice

Simultaneous to my data collection, the teacher candidates completed coursework related to sensitive topics and dilemma cases. As part of discussing Social Studies on Day 1, the class participated in a collaborative activity to construct a definition of ‘sensitive topics’ (see Appendix A for definition). This definition bound the teacher candidates’ writing of a dilemma case they experienced or witnessed as a course assignment (Appendix B). The teacher candidates discussed these ‘personal’ dilemma cases on Day 9 – first in groups of four or five and then in a whole class discussion. I created a set of prompts to guide the large group discussion (Appendix C). These conversations provided an opportunity for teacher candidates to consider responses to sensitive situations that occurred in their placement classrooms. The teacher candidates

later completed a written reflection about their own experience with dilemma cases and sensitive topics (Appendix D).

Research Method

In this section, I describe my data sources, data collection, and data analysis methods. The dilemma case utilized in the present study is introduced to set the stage for my explanation of the characteristics of practical reasoning demonstrated by teacher candidates when engaging with this particular narrative.

Data Sources

To address my research questions, I obtained data from four sources: (1) individual teacher candidate's written response to a dilemma case; (2) the transcript from a whole class, case-based discussion; (3) notecards, each with an individual teacher candidate's response to prompts following the case-based discussion; and (4) my own anecdotal notes recorded during data collection and data analysis. I combined aspects of three methods to analyze these data: (1) interpretivist methods, (2) general induction, and (3) analytic induction.

Data Collection

I collected data in an elementary social studies methods course taught by a fellow graduate student instructor. This was the second time I had collected data to study practical reasoning, the first time being a pilot study conducted in the spring of 2013. In February 2014, I provided an overview of my dissertation study and requested consent from the teacher candidates to be participants. The data collection process is outlined in Table 4.

Table 4

Summary of Data Collection Procedures with Date Completed

Data Collection

Describe research study and distribute consent forms to teacher candidates for their consideration (2/13/14)

Facilitate an individual reading of and written response to *A Sensitive Competition* (3/13/14)

Facilitate a second reading of *A Sensitive Competition*, a whole class case-based discussion, and an individual written response (5/8/14)

The dilemma case. To prepare for my first research question, I crafted a dilemma case, *A Sensitive Competition*, regarding socioeconomic class to present to the teacher candidates. The narrative is presented in Figure 3 (see also Appendix E).

A Sensitive Competition

My third grade classroom is located in an elementary school where approximately 35% of the students are enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program; this percentage has been growing in recent years. One of the community service projects that has been a strong tradition at the school is an annual food drive that takes place in March. Students are asked to bring in food items and there is a contest by classroom. The class that brings the most items is rewarded with a pajama party. My dilemma focuses on one of my students, Monica - a happy girl who is social in class and well liked by her peers. I often have to remind her to focus on herself or to save her stories for morning meeting. Monica lives with her parents and two younger brothers.

One morning in early March, members of the school's "K" (Kiwanis) Club came to each classroom to announce the upcoming food drive and contest. I noticed that Monica's body language changed and I did not have to give her any reminders about her choices for the rest of the day. Throughout the week, students began to bring in items for the "food drive" box provided for our classroom. The excitement grew as the date for the end of the drive drew near. Monica did not share in this anticipation. I

thought about pulling her aside to talk to her, but the reason for her withdrawn behavior surfaced in her weekly journal. As I was reading her response to the prompt of the week – “How might you help in your community?” – Monica wrote, “I wish the stupid school did not have a contest to bring in food. My mom and I go to the food shelf now.” I had to re-read this sentence; I had no idea that this was part of Monica’s experience. How should I respond to Monica in our interactive journal? I thought back to any signs of a change in her family life. She did not exhibit any of the signs of poverty I remember discussing in one of my college courses – dirty clothes or clothes worn for multiple days, same shoes that often seemed small, poor hygiene. I began to think about how excited my class was about the food drive, yet how sad Monica has been the past week. I realized that I needed to think more about this tradition at the school and how it might affect students. Monica was brave to write about it, but how many students were not so bold? It had not occurred to me that some students are recipients of the same food they are asked to bring to school to be participants in the food drive. I wondered whether other students in the school were also having feelings like Monica and what I should do about it this year.

Figure 3. The dilemma case utilized in this study: A Sensitive Competition.

Rationale for the dilemma case. My rationale for selecting socioeconomic class for the content of the dilemma case is because this topic is often invisible to teacher candidates. In the previous semesters of my teaching the elementary social studies methods course, teacher candidates had rarely mentioned socioeconomic class, suggesting a lack of awareness. Additionally, Vagle and Jones (2012) contend that “social class issues in classroom pedagogy are too often ignored and undertheorized” (p. 320). Socioeconomic class is an issue that can either be intentionally addressed in classrooms, such as in studying homelessness, or it can be a topic that arises unexpectedly. The second scenario is the focus of the present study. Unplanned situations are often accompanied by uncertainty; this is also the case for sensitive topics.

Preparation for data collection. In addition to creating the narrative in Figure 3, I also revised an instrument from my pilot study (see Appendix F) to accompany this dilemma case (Appendix G). Finally, I created a short PowerPoint presentation to provide a basic overview of practical reasoning for the teacher candidates. In March 2014, I collected data to address my first question: What are the characteristics of practical reasoning demonstrated by elementary teacher candidates when they engage in written case analysis related to a sensitive topic? After viewing the PowerPoint, the teacher candidates read the dilemma case, *A Sensitive Competition*. Then, the teacher candidates independently described their initial thoughts about and prospective response to this situation; their responses constitute one source of data.

To collect data for my second research question, I prepared to facilitate a whole class case-based discussion. I created a second set of prompts (see Appendix H) that focused on dissecting the case. In May 2014, I facilitated a class discussion to gather data for my second question: What are the characteristics of practical reasoning demonstrated by elementary teacher candidates when they engage in a case-based discussion regarding a sensitive topic? Teacher candidates read *A Sensitive Competition* a second time. As they read, the candidates annotated their copies of the case to prepare for the discussion. They also wrote questions that the case provoked for them. I facilitated a whole class case-based discussion focusing on details and issues of this dilemma case. I audio-recorded and then transcribed the hour-long

discussion; this transcript comprises one source of data. Following the discussion, I distributed notecards and asked the teacher candidates to individually respond in writing to two prompts:

1. What would you do if you were the teacher in this dilemma case?
2. What do you understand now after having engaged in case methods?

The written responses to the first prompt became one source of data in this study. The responses to the second prompt enriched this paper; three examples are included in Chapter 5 as part of the discussion about sensitive topics. This source of data will be analyzed in the future apart from the present study.

Data Analysis Methods

Three methods provided direction for analyzing my data; this combination enabled me to attend to the context and complexity of teacher candidates' thoughts and actions. Table 5 illustrates these methods of qualitative inquiry: interpretivist (Schwandt, 1994), general induction (Thomas, 1993), and analytic induction (Huberman & Miles, 1994).

Table 5

Three Data Analysis Methods Informing this Qualitative Inquiry

Interpretivist Method	General Inductive Approach	Analytic Induction
<p>Conceptualization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ a circular process to make meaning 	<p>Conceptualization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ specific objectives and multiple readings and interpretations of raw data • Make decisions about what is most important based on assumptions and experiences • Develop categories from raw data into a model or framework 	<p>Conceptualization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use an iterative procedure of question-and-answer cycles regarding cases • Employ counting to see what is in the data • Form consistency with the constructs in the literature
<p>Schwandt, 1994, pp. 121</p>	<p>Thomas, 1993, pp. 3-4, 7</p>	<p>Huberman & Miles, 1994, pp. 431-2</p>

While ontological hermeneutics guided my investigation, it also informed the methods of analysis I used to interpret my data. Schwandt (1994) describes a circular process of data analysis in which the researcher relies on her other interpretations to produce meaning.

In addition to aligning with interpretivist methods, I was inspired by a ‘straightforward’ method put forth by Thomas (1993) – the *general inductive approach*. “Inductive approaches are intended to aid an understanding of meaning in complex data” (Thomas, 1993, p. 3). I recognized the complexity

both in my data and in the iterative process I invoked to interpret the teacher candidates' reasoning. Thomas offers three purposes for using a general inductive approach to analyze data: (1) to condense raw text data into a summary format, (2) to establish clear links between objectives and findings from raw data, and (3) to develop a model or theory about processes evident in raw data (p. 2). The research questions assist with the analysis in an interactive process, in which inductive analysis assumes some deduction. While Thomas puts forth a distinct approach to analyzing qualitative data, he acknowledges the role of other methodologists (e.g., Strauss & Corbin, 1990) that he invoked to create his approach.

Finally, my data analysis aligns with *analytic induction*, a method outlined by Huberman and Miles (1994). They describe an iterative procedure that includes "question-and-answer cycles" (p. 431). This procedure attempts to express regularities in the world through inductive cycles of analysis; however, as with Thomas (1993), deductive analyses are mixed in with this back-and-forth process. In addition to this iterative procedure, Huberman and Miles (1994) offer 13 "tactics" for generating meaning when analyzing or coding the data. Two of these in particular influenced my analysis: (1) employing counting to see "what's there", and (2) forming consistency with the "referent constructs in the literature" (p. 432).

In order to be thorough, consistent, and reasonable, my analysis took place in multiple cycles, which involved both inductive and deductive reasoning.

Pendlebury (1990) contends: “The most illuminating way of evaluating the reasonableness of each teacher’s course of action is to get her to give a formal reconstruction of her thinking” (p. 178). Table 6 includes the criteria for assessing the interpretations made during analysis.

Table 6

Criteria Informing this Qualitative Inquiry

Interpretivist Method	General Inductive Approach	Analytic Induction
<p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thoroughness • coherence • comprehensiveness • useful • worthy 	<p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consistent • credible • useful 	<p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • probable • reasonable • likely to be true <p>(Robinson, 1951; Znaniecki, 1934)</p>
<p>Schwandt, 1994, pp. 121-122</p>	<p>Thomas, 1993, pp. 3-4, 7</p>	<p>Huberman & Miles, 1994, pp. 431-2</p>

According to Thomas (1993) and Huberman and Miles (1994), multiple cycles involve both inductive and deductive thinking. Figure 4 illustrates these iterative processes.

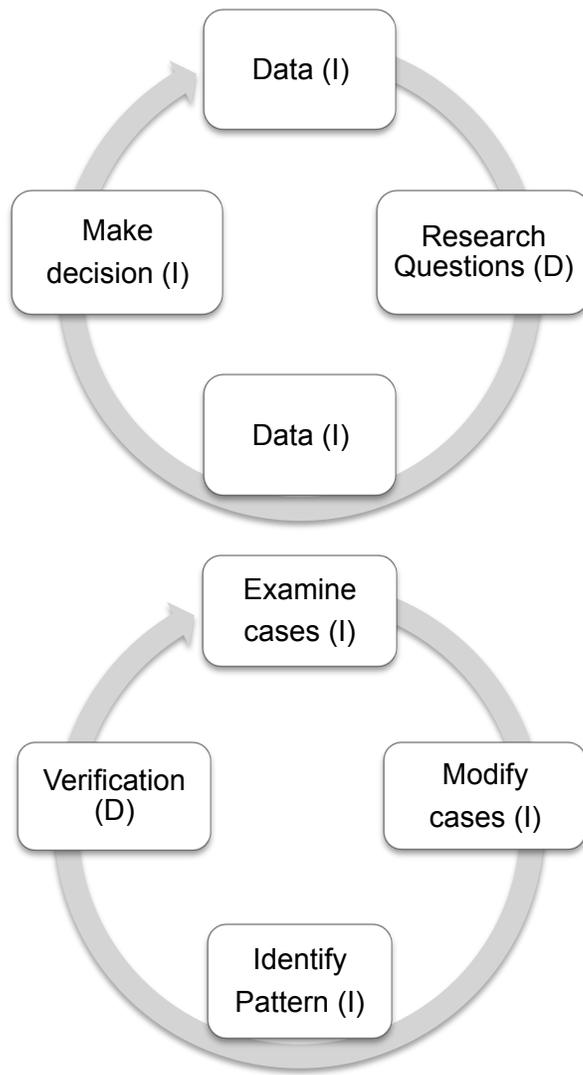


Figure 4. Cyclical processes of inductive (I) analysis with the presence of deduction (D). This figure illustrates two iterative cycles: upper cycle (Thomas, 1993, p. 3) and lower cycle (Huberman & Miles, 1994, p. 431).

Function of Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot study during spring semester of 2013 in order to refine my data analytic procedures. I conducted this study in an elementary social

studies methods course with 22 teacher candidate participants. The teacher candidates provided written responses to two vignettes about sensitive topics both before and after engaging in case-based pedagogies (case writing and case-based discussions). For my dissertation study, I changed my analytic focus from a pre- and post-design looking at changes in individual teacher candidate's discernment to a descriptive format striving to capture the characteristics of practical reasoning demonstrated by an entire cohort of teacher candidates. My purpose shifted from judging the worth of each response based on the criteria to describing the characteristics of practical reasoning present when employing two different case-based pedagogies – written case analysis and case-based discussion. This shift enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the literature and data due to the iterative process I employed to describe practical reasoning. From the pilot study, I learned how to identify components of discernment within each unit of analysis and combine these into a model with three main criteria (*who*, *what*, and *where*).

Data Analysis Procedures

Practical reasoning situates this study as the theoretical framework. It is also the objective, as the present study aims to further define practical reasoning utilizing two case-based pedagogies. I seek to illustrate practical reasoning in the context of teacher preparation: What does practical reasoning look like in an elementary social studies methods course? The purpose of my data analysis is

to describe practical reasoning using exemplar responses (excellent examples of each category of practical reasoning that are representative, yet not atypical).

Characteristics of Practical Reasoning

Up to this point, I have invoked relevant literature to distinguish practical reasoning from practical argument, to differentiate between making decisions from taking action, and to identify empirical studies related to practical reasoning. The literature also conceptualizes characteristics of practical reasoning; I judiciously selected three – emotion, cognition, and imagination – as a starting point for analyzing my data. With each round of analysis, I gained a deeper understanding of these specific characteristics as they relate to practical reasoning. I constantly added notes to the framework I was developing and often returned to the literature to read more about these characteristics. Next, I explain the iterative process I followed to interpret my data.

Iterative Process

While re-reading *Dewey & Eros: Wisdom and Desire in the Art of Teaching* by Garrison (2010), I came upon a sentence that gave me pause: “Practical reasoning is reasoning for a purpose, and it involves emotion and imagination as well as cognition” (p. 173). Seeing this prompted me to return to Nussbaum’s (1990) words from *Love’s Knowledge*: practical reasoning “acknowledges emotions and imagination” (p. 4); she also describes perception as having “emotional, imaginative, as well as intellectual components” (p. 80). I searched other literature I had read to learn about the practical reasoning

process to look for these characteristics. I found that several scholars (Heilbronn, 2008; Johnson, 1993; Orton, 1998; Phelan, 2009; Stengel, 2013) incorporated one or more of these characteristics into their explanations of reasoning. I decided to use three characteristics present in the literature - emotion, cognition, and imagination – to guide my data analysis. Figure 5 is a diagram I created to guide my interpretation.

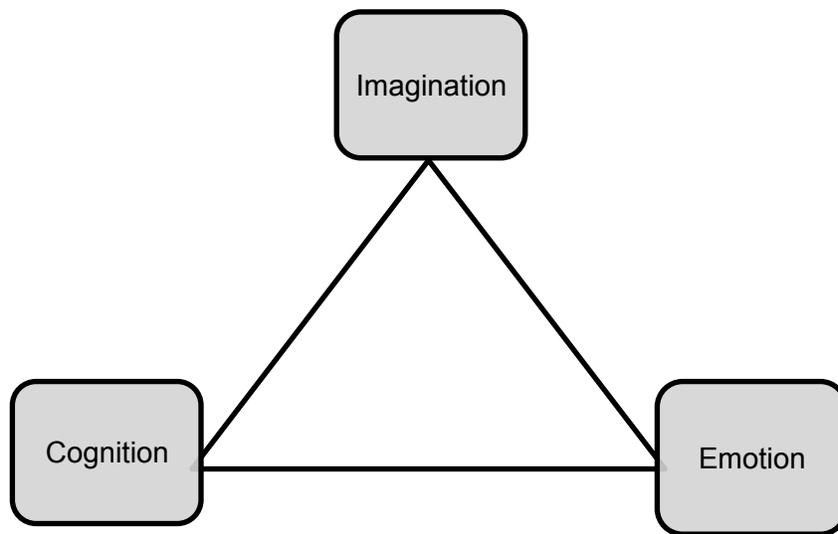


Figure 5. Characteristics of practical reasoning used for early rounds of data analysis.

Research question 1. I conducted two rounds of data analysis for my first research question: What are the characteristics of practical reasoning demonstrated by elementary teacher candidates when they engage in written case analysis regarding a sensitive topic? My unit of analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1995) was a teacher candidate’s entire written response to the dilemma case, A

Sensitive Competition. Each unit consisted of responses to four prompts designed to capture teacher candidates' thinking (see Appendix G). During these early analytic cycles, I noticed a pattern (Huberman & Miles, 1994) of verbs in the responses, particularly 'feel' and 'think'; these verbs helped me weigh which characteristic of practical reasoning was most important (Thomas, 1993) within each response. I also noticed the focal object of each response – the student (Monica) or the situation (food drive). Throughout my interpretation of these data, I recorded anecdotal notes.

As I reflected on these two rounds of data analysis, I realized that my unit of analysis needed to change for two reasons. First, there were too many responses that contained evidence of multiple characteristics of practical reasoning. My analysis felt limited by the extensive length of each unit. Second, I realized that I needed to divide the unit of analysis to align with the practical reasoning process – making decisions and taking action. This was essential because I distinguish these two parts of practical reasoning throughout my study. Prompt A relates to making decisions and Prompt B relates to taking action. I changed the unit of analysis to better analyze the characteristics of practical reasoning embedded in the teacher candidates' words.

The other key decision I made following these early rounds of analysis was to create additional categories that combined the characteristics of practical reasoning. To capture the complexity of the teacher candidates' responses, I added these categories to the framework I was developing: (1) emotion-

cognition, (2) emotion-imagination, and (3) cognition-imagination. I also added a holistic category to represent all three characteristics of practical reasoning: emotion-cognition-imagination. Figure 6 illustrates the updated diagram I used for future rounds of data analysis. After using Figure 6 to re-analyze the teacher candidates' written responses, I moved on to my second research question.

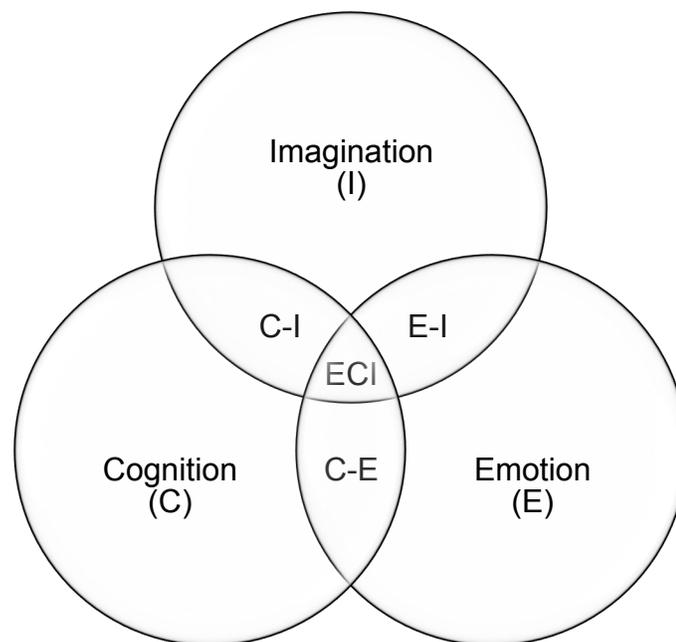


Figure 6. Categories of practical reasoning used for later rounds of data analysis.

Research question 2. My second research question is: What are the characteristics of practical reasoning demonstrated by teacher candidates when they engage in case-based discussion regarding a sensitive topic? The unit of analysis I used for these data was each teacher candidates' spoken response during the discussion; each time a different voice spoke, I created a new unit of

analysis. I analyzed the portion of the transcript in which the teacher candidates discussed *A Sensitive Competition*. I used the framework illustrated in Figure 5 to interpret the teacher candidates' oral responses.

The final source of data I analyzed consisted of teacher candidate responses recorded on a notecard following the case-based discussion. I interpreted their responses to the question: What would you do if you were the teacher in this dilemma case? The entire response was used as the unit of analysis. As I used Figure 6 to analyze these responses, I looked for consistency with other items in each category. I continued to add notes to the framework.

Each round of analysis reinforced consistency between the teacher candidates' responses and the constructs in the literature (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Following multiple rounds of interpretation, each unit of analysis collected provided evidence of at least one characteristic of practical reasoning selected from the literature, in particular Garrison (2010) and Nussbaum (1990). I shed light on the relationship between how practical reasoning is described in the literature and how the characteristics are described in the data; my description is partial in that other characteristics may surface with a different analysis. My interpretation produced meanings based on the teacher candidates' responses; these are described in the following paragraphs.

Features of main categories. Thomas (1993) stated that each category of data shall have, among other things, a description of meaning and examples

of text. This subsection puts forth a series of figures to show the attributes associated with each of the three main characteristics of practical reasoning. Each figure is followed by one teacher candidate's response that exemplifies that particular characteristic. The exemplars are excellent examples of each category of practical reasoning. Within each example, the underlined words highlight the language that represents the essence of each characteristic based on the entire body of data and on the literature (see Garrison, 2010; Nussbaum, 1990; Stengel, 2013). While some responses contain a reference to an attribute from a different category, I decided to acknowledge the attribute as evidence only if it expressed a complete thought regarding that particular characteristic. For example, in the response below, the teacher candidate identifies an effect of the food drive is making students feel "guilty/sad." The response includes emotions, but does not exemplify the attributes of the category of 'emotion' such as compassion or sympathy. I also looked for the type of thinking at the core of the response (compassionate, logical, or creative). Finally, I considered the spirit of the response as a whole. For example, the response below includes language of all three characteristics of practical reasoning, but focuses on logical reasoning about the food drive and, therefore, is an example of 'cognition.'

I think a food drive is a great community service idea [cognition] but maybe it would be better to present it differently [imagination]. By making it a competition, that forces students to contribute [cognition] or it makes them feel guilty/sad [emotion] if they can't.

This teacher candidate includes words that illustrate each of the three characteristics, yet the essence of this response is ‘cognition’ because it focuses on the situation of the food drive, and not the emotional needs of students or creative alternatives to the food drive.

The following paragraphs describe each of the three main characteristics of practical reasoning using words present in or elicited from the data to authenticate the literature.

Emotion. Figure 7 describes the characteristic of emotion.



Figure 7. Attributes associated with emotion.

Following is an exemplar teacher candidate response for ‘emotion’ from the written case analysis; underlined words are consistent with this category’s key attributes:

To this situation it is extremely important to talk with Monica and be aware of how she may be feeling. To make sure she is not feeling isolated or ashamed. This can be done in either a response to her journal or done in person, depending on the relationship with the student. It is important in

that she is a member of the student community and in order to thrive and be herself, she must feel comfortable within the community.

This response exemplifies ‘emotion’ because it focuses on the individual in the situation. Feeling is a necessary part of seeing and doing good in response to the situation at hand (Nussbaum, 1990). According to Garrison (2010): “Part of bestowing value on students involves reflecting on our emotional reactions to students’ action, collecting sympathetic data, and inquiring carefully that we may know a student desires and dreams before responding” (p. 82). Reasoning with emotion highlights compassion and relationships – essential components of striving for goodness, yet ‘emotion’ does not embody practical reasoning.

Cognition. Figure 8 describes the characteristic of cognition.

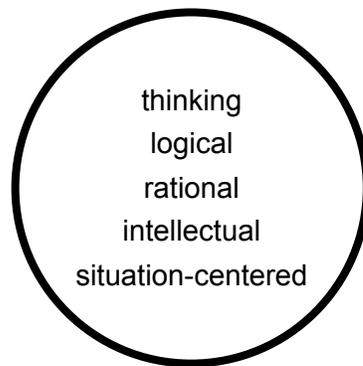


Figure 8. Attributes associated with cognition.

Following is an exemplar teacher candidate response for ‘cognition’ from the written case analysis. The underlined words correspond to cognition’s main attributes:

I think school should not reward class that brings the most items to have a pizza party. It’s not fair for students who can’t bring food but want to

participate and contribute to class. Students won't learn anything from trying to bring more food. Poor students lost chance to contribute to their classroom in this activity.

This response conveys cognition because it highlights the food drive itself. It also shows rational thinking related to fairness. Thinking about teaching situations with logic (Garrison, 2010) is an essential part of the practical reasoning process. Orton (1998) states, "What a teacher is thinking matters" (p. 179). Reasoning with cognition emphasizes the role of intellect in complex situations; however, cognition alone is not sufficient for practical reasoning.

Imagination. Figure 9 describes the characteristic of imagination.



Figure 9. Attributes associated with imagination.

Following is an exemplar teacher candidate response for 'imagination' from the written response following the discussion; the underlined words are compatible with this category's central attributes:

I would attempt to slowly change the system by maybe taking away the reward or even collecting old clothes instead of food! I also would have a conversation with other staff members to bring this to the table.

The essence of this response illustrates ‘imagination’ – the teacher candidate stresses changing the system and offering alternatives. Teacher candidate responses that suggest wonder about other possibilities exemplify ‘imagination.’ Johnson (1993) identifies creativity in reasoning: “Our ways of perceiving and responding to situations and people are transformed, and new realities come into existence” (p. 212). Teacher candidates have the potential to transform uncomfortable situations with vision beyond the actual (Garrison, 2010). Responses that show creative vision demonstrate imagination, but wondering without emotion and cognition does not characterize practical reasoning.

Summary. The series of figures and exemplar responses presented above describe the three main characteristics of practical reasoning. These characteristics comprise part of the analytic framework for this study. Table 7 summarizes the attributes of ‘emotion,’ ‘cognition,’ and ‘imagination’ utilizing words found in the literature and drawn from the data.

Table 7

Attributes of the Three Main Characteristics of Practical Reasoning

Emotion	Cognition	Imagination
feeling	thinking	transforming
compassion	logical	creative
sympathy	rational	possibilities
affective	intellectual	vision
human-centered	situation-centered	change-centered

Features of combined categories. In order to paint a clear picture of the remaining characteristics in the analytic framework, this subsection lays out one example for each combined category in Figure 6. In addition to the underlining used in the sections above, single letters denote the specific characteristic of practical reasoning in these blended responses: ‘e’ for emotion, ‘c’ for cognition, and ‘i’ for imagination.

Emotion-Cognition. Following is an exemplar teacher candidate response for ‘emotion-cognition’ from the written case analysis:

My initial thought is that this is a really tough situation. The food drive [c] at school seems like it boosts school morale and many students and classrooms get into it. However, there is a flip side to this situation for students like Monica [e] who go to the food shelter and might actually be recipients of the food that is donated [c] at school. I can see where both

sides of this situation are coming from. This is a difficult situation and I feel [e] like everyone's feelings [e] should be taken into consideration.

This response captures both emotion and cognition – the way we think affects the way we feel (Garrison, 2010; Nussbaum, 1990). These two characteristics go hand-in-hand (Nussbaum, 1990) and are both involved in practical judgment (Heilbronn, 2008). This teacher candidate highlights the interconnected nature of discerning the situation and the student and uses both logic and compassion to respond.

Emotion-Imagination. Following is an exemplar teacher candidate response for 'emotion-imagination' from the written case analysis:

I would talk to Monica [e] alone, thanking her for her thoughts in her journal. I would let her know that she can still be a part of this school community [e] even if her family [e] can't participate. I would make it clear that not bringing items to school does not mean she is any less of a person than other kids [e]. I would find out other ways [i] to make her feel [e] like she contributed to the drive such as letting her be in charge of collecting the food and finding out who wins [i]. I would bring this up at the next staff meeting to find other alternatives [i] such as: reading minute contests or pizza parties based on attendance [i].

Both emotion and imagination are contained in this response – a way to pursue possibilities with compassion. This teacher candidate demonstrates a focus on

the student and a desire to change the food drive – a combination of feeling and imagining.

Cognition-Imagination. Following is an exemplar teacher candidate response for ‘cognition-imagination’ from the case-based discussion (oral response):

So often people get so caught up in like tradition [c] of it, because like you said like we are at 35% but it's growing so like probably like it was a more affluent school [c] in the past like when we started, and like when I read the last sentence here it's like well what can I do like for the next year, like I feel like, I don't know, obviously this isn't even a real school, but I could see very easily like people being like “Nope, this is tradition [c] and this is how we are doing it,” like especially in that environment, but then like having a look at like what can you do as a teacher or like as a team to do something to make it something more accessible [i] for all of your students like making it like, well ‘we're really not going to do this contest [i], but we'll celebrate at the end of the week anyways like something good that we did’, like ‘we can make cards [i] to go along with this’ or like ‘we can do something’ like within your own room, at least to make it a safer place and gradually spread that [i] ...

This response demonstrates ‘cognition’ and ‘imagination,’ a way to use rational rules and imaginative problem solving (Garrison, 2010). This teacher candidate calls out the food drive as a tradition and shows logical thinking about the school

in the dilemma case. She goes on to demonstrate imagination by offering concrete changes for transforming the situation.

Emotion-Cognition-Imagination. Following is an exemplar teacher candidate response for ‘emotion-cognition-imagination’ from the case-based discussion (oral response):

I think that goes along with like, I think [c] we talked earlier in the class like about how you can make it more meaningful for the students [e] cause I feel [e] like, I don’t want to say superficial, but I feel [e] like a lot of times when we think [c] about like, ‘service’ - it’s just like, “Oh there’s just this group of people, let me help them, they need something”, versus like really digging deeper and maybe they could have like gone to the food shelf [i] or talked to someone that like started a food shelf [i] and why they were passionate about it or seeing like both sides of the spectrum [i] versus just feeling [e] like you always have to *give* to people or like why do people need to receive and, maybe you could connect it to like economics [c] and like what disparities are going on. I feel like it’s always just so superficial, like ‘we just need to like have a contest [c] to do something.’ I don’t know I just feel [e] like there’s ways to make it deeper so there is more meaning for everyone [e] and connected on different levels so they really feel [e] invested and hopefully that would make like this student feel more comfortable [e] in this setting [c].

This response contains evidence of all three characteristics of practical reasoning; this demonstrates stronger practical reasoning than employing a single characteristic or two characteristics. The teacher candidate perceived the whole situation including the humans and the context of both in the school and larger community. Her response further defines Fenstermacher and Richardson's (1993) general definition of practical reasoning cited in Chapter 1: "We reason about our actions in relation to what we want to accomplish and what we believe to be the case about who, what and where we are" (p. 103). This teacher candidate's response paints a picture of practical reasoning in teacher preparation.

Summary. The exemplar responses presented above describe the four combined characteristics of practical reasoning. These characteristics comprise the remainder of the analytic framework used for this study. All seven categories take on key roles in further defining practical reasoning in teacher preparation. In the remainder of this paper, 'characteristic' is used to describe one of the three features selected to capture the essence of practical reasoning: emotion, cognition, and imagination. The term 'category' denotes the blending of these characteristics into one of four combinations: emotion-cognition, emotion-imagination, cognition-imagination, and emotion-cognition-imagination.

Data Analysis Procedures Synopsis

This section outlined the data analysis procedures, particularly the iterative processes I employed to interpret the data. The goal of my analysis was

to categorize the responses based on the attributes of each characteristic of practical reasoning. I described each of the seven categories of practical reasoning characteristics using exemplar teacher candidate responses along with excerpts from the literature. My analysis revealed that the data embodied the characteristics of practical reasoning I selected from the literature.

Inter-rater Reliability

Thomas (1993) provides direction for establishing reliability in terms of using a *coding consistency check*. He defines this process as follows:

An independent coder is given the research objectives, the categories and descriptions of each category, without the raw text attached. They are then given a sample of the raw text (previously coded by the initial coder) and asked to assign sections of the text to the categories that have been developed. The raw text selected has sections of text from which the initial categories were derived. (p. 7)

Two social studies scholars utilized the diagram showing the practical reasoning characteristics (see Figure 6) to code some of my data. The first scholar analyzed data from each of the sources (written case analysis, case-based discussion transcript, and post-discussion written response); this took place early in my data analysis process. This reviewer found evidence of practical reasoning in all of the excerpts she coded. As a result of this check, I learned that I needed to create samples for the combined categories. I also realized that I needed to stress that judging the goodness of each response was not part of the analysis.

Six months following this initial consistency check, another reviewer followed the data analysis procedures I had outlined and read one third of the data from each source. Table 8 illustrates her coding of the data.

Table 8

Inter-Rater Reliability Results from a Social Studies Scholar

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Prompt A</u>	<u>Prompt B</u>	<u>Transcript</u>	<u>Notecard</u>
Emotion (E)	56%	22%		
Cognition (C)		11%	33%	22%
Imagination (I)		11%	22%	33%
E-C	22%	22%	11%	33%
E-I				
C-I		11%	22%	11%
E-C-I	22%	22%	11%	

Note. The scholar coded 9 of the 27 responses from each data source.

When aligning these results with my coding, they show consistency in relation to ‘emotion,’ ‘emotion-cognition,’ and ‘emotion-cognition-imagination.’ The largest variation is in the category of ‘emotion-imagination;’ my coding revealed this category to be present when contemplating action (Prompt B and Notecard). A consideration regarding the coding of the practical reasoning characteristics is the influence of prior understandings regarding ‘emotion,’ ‘cognition,’ and ‘imagination’ for both scholars in contrast with my interpretation following an in-depth study of the literature.

Role of the Researcher

My role was both researcher and teacher at different points throughout the elementary social studies methods course that was the setting for my study. On one occasion, I played the teacher role by sharing a pedagogical strategy related to spatial thinking called a sketch map; a sketch map is a drawing of a place based on one's mental image. Another time, I co-facilitated small group discussions of the dilemma cases the teacher candidates wrote. I felt strongly about establishing a reciprocal relationship because I wanted the participants to view my time in class as helping their learning – not just as a time for me to learn from them.

As the researcher, I acknowledge that my assumptions and experiences came into play when I interpreted the data for the present study (Thomas, 1993). I exercised diligence in following qualitative methods to interpret elementary teacher candidates' practical reasoning as expressed in written and oral responses.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explained the design and methods of my study. I conducted a qualitative inquiry to learn about the practical reasoning of elementary teacher candidates. I relied on three methods – interpretivist, general induction, and analytic induction – to interpret the teacher candidates' words collected from two different case-based pedagogies. I described and illustrated the iterative processes I followed to investigate my research questions were

described and illustrated. I also introduced the framework I utilized to analyze the data. To conclude this chapter, I shared the process I employed to establish reliability for my analysis.

In the next chapter, I further define the characteristics of practical reasoning by highlighting exemplar teacher candidate responses. Chapter 4 also includes findings regarding the prevalence of practical reasoning.

I understand a lot more about how to dig deep into a sensitive topic and really analyze a situation from many sides so that I can respond to it appropriately.

Teacher Candidate, 2014

Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter is organized around the presentation of findings related to both practical reasoning and case methods. I describe how elementary teacher candidates demonstrate the characteristics of practical reasoning – emotion, cognition, and imagination – when they engage in case-based pedagogies. In the first section, I provide examples of teacher candidates' words that exemplify these characteristics in response to the dilemma case, *A Sensitive Competition* (Appendix E). This qualitative data provides evidence to further define practical reasoning in teacher preparation. In the second section, I illustrate evidence of practical reasoning that resulted when I employed counting to see what was in the data (Huberman & Miles, 1994). I present these findings according to: (1) the seven categories of characteristics – emotion, cognition, imagination, emotion-cognition, emotion-imagination, cognition-imagination, and emotion-cognition-imagination, (2) the two parts of the practical reasoning process – making decisions and taking action, and (3) the two case-based pedagogies employed to collect data – written case analysis and case-based discussion. Figure 10 displays the diagram I utilized for data analysis.

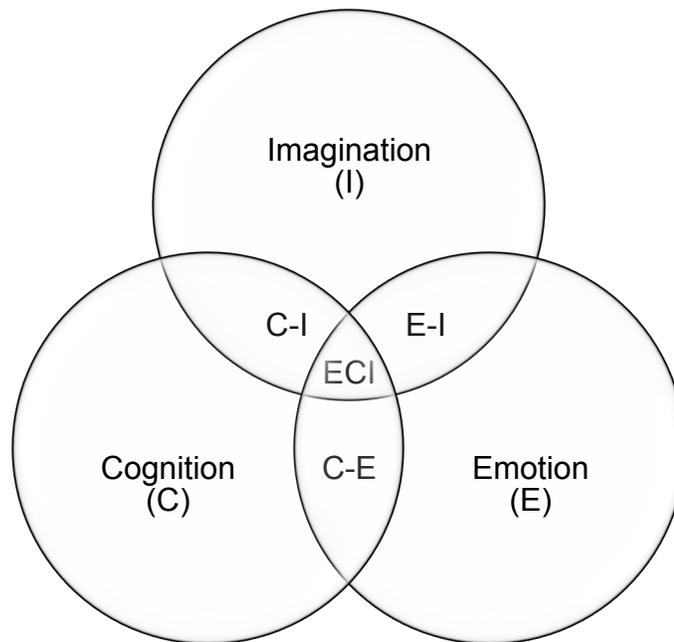


Figure 10. Categories of practical reasoning used for data analysis.

Exemplars of Practical Reasoning

What does practical reasoning look like in an elementary social studies methods course? The data included in this section were conscientiously selected as exemplar teacher candidate responses. These responses are excellent examples of the particular characteristic of practical reasoning; they are representative, but not atypical. The responses come from several written and verbal sources: (1) the instrument (Appendix G) designed for written case analysis, (2) the transcript from the case-based discussion, and (3) the notecards used at the end of the case-based discussion. Each of these sources focused on responses to the dilemma case. The underlined words in each exemplar highlight the language I used to identify the response as one of the seven categories of practical reasoning. The following examples show the

characteristics of practical reasoning demonstrated by teacher candidates as they grappled with a dilemma about a school's food drive.

Emotion (E). 'Emotion' is the first of three main characteristics of practical reasoning. Evidence of this characteristic in the following responses shows the teacher candidates citing emotional concerns for Monica. The responses also demonstrate attention to Monica's family and the students in the class – the humans in the situation. Example A is a written response:

A. I thought it was really brave of Monica to share what was going on with her family situation. I also found it sad that she felt uncomfortable because of the school activity like she was being singled out. I think that Monica probably felt singled out because the school was trying to help out people in need which was really her. I see why this would make someone uncomfortable and angry.

This teacher candidate acknowledged her own feeling of sadness about this situation; inclusions of a candidate's own feelings were not very common in the entire body of data. Most responses categorized as demonstrating 'emotion' focused on the Monica and/or the other students' feelings, often using words such as 'embarrassed' or 'ashamed.' The response above embodies compassionate discernment in that the teacher candidate sees the personal cost of the food drive on Monica.

Example B is an illustration of 'emotion' from the case-based discussion:

B. It kind of sounded like she was brave for writing in her journal and stuff but it's like I don't think that she was brave. I think she was frustrated and upset and angry that the school was doing that, I don't think – I mean like yes of course she was brave by writing it down, but I mean like you kind of failed by waiting, cause like it even says like “I wonder if this happens to anybody else” it's like OK you should know your students, now that 35% of your students are receiving free and reduced lunch, so they obviously have some like food insecurity and monetary insecurity, that's a good chunk of your class ...

This teacher candidate spoke compassionately about the effect of the food drive on Monica. This response contains strong language about the teacher in the dilemma case – ‘you kind of failed by waiting’ and ‘you should know your students.’ The responses during the discussion took on more of a judgmental view than the other written responses. This particular response also shows how getting caught up in emotions when responding may limit seeing the whole situation and lead to a rush in judgment.

Cognition (C). ‘Cognition’ is the second of three main characteristics of practical reasoning. Evidence of this characteristic in the following responses demonstrates the teacher candidates identifying the food drive and its impact on the student(s) at this school. The following exemplar is a written response:

A. It would definitely be hard to come up with an “easy” solution. To make Monica happy, the school wouldn't have the food drive. Overall,

however, this would likely mean less food shelf donations. This would mean the whole school would have to stop the tradition, which wouldn't be good either.

This response conveys 'cognition' as it focuses on the food drive. The teacher candidate mentions Monica, but it is in the context of the food drive, not on her own accord. This teacher candidate shows logical thinking by identifying a cause and effect relationship between the food drive and Monica and the school; this response also acknowledges the community by noting fewer donations for the food shelf. The word 'good' is used in this response; while this was not common overall, it provides evidence that this teacher candidate was thinking under the guise of goodness.

The second example of 'cognition' is from a notecard recorded after the case-based discussion:

B. I would talk to administration about the issue with having this type of fundraiser that more and more of our student population is reflected in.

This teacher candidate's words about what to do focus on the food drive. This response demonstrates rational thinking by taking a sensible approach to the situation at hand – it implies discussing the food drive, not necessarily doing another service learning project.

Imagination (I). 'Imagination' is the third of three main characteristics of practical reasoning. Evidence of this characteristic in the following responses

shows the teacher candidates citing possibilities for making changes and seeing beyond this situation. The following exemplar is a written response:

A. I think that setting this up as a competition and not acknowledging that there are people who rely on the food right in the school community is a major social class problem. Furthermore, I think that this TC needs to think beyond the stereotypes of students living in poverty – they don't all re-wear clothes, they aren't all sad, etc. I think when it is a competition, there is a "more is better" mindset that is really detrimental to students who do not have the "more" or any extra at home to give. I think the school can talk about serving the community in ways other than just donating.

This teacher candidate perceives many layers in regards to the situation; she has a vision beyond the dilemma case. This response comments on the teacher candidate from *A Sensitive Competition* by challenging her to think beyond stereotypes. This response also addresses the mindset of food drive 'competition' and goes on to suggest other ways to serve the community. Several of the responses categorized as 'imagination' involve references to service learning, though often suggesting cleaning up a park which is unrelated to meeting the hunger needs of a community. This teacher candidate advocates transforming the entire situation.

Example B is an exemplar of 'imagination' from the case-based discussion:

B. Or even like, not even having them, I mean there are other ways like to help out in the community than like donating things, like you said doing a research project or like help out with the community garden, I mean I don't know, or like donating time is also just as valuable ...

This response demonstrates creative ways to take action to change the food drive – community garden or donating time. This teacher candidate spoke about possibilities to transform the situation. ‘Imagination’ is an essential piece of practical reasoning that allows teacher candidates to “catch glimpses of what could be” (Garrison, 2010, p. 84). Incorporating ‘imagination’ when responding to dilemmas frees teacher candidates to trust their inner voices and respond in ways that honor the individual(s) or group(s) in each situation. ‘Imagination’ also brings external influences into play and acknowledges the culture of the community – the common good.

These exemplar responses for ‘imagination’ demonstrate not just changing the food drive, but transforming the situation to include ‘other ways’ to help the community. Transforming was the key criterion used to categorize a response as exemplifying ‘imagination.’ Did the response suggest an alternative to the food drive? Or in some cases, did the teacher candidate see beyond the food drive? These were the questions I posed to distinguish a response from exemplifying ‘cognition’ to embodying ‘imagination.’

The responses reported thus far represent a single characteristic of practical reasoning; other responses include attributes of more than one

characteristic. The examples in the remainder of this section demonstrate one of four categories that combine characteristics of practical reasoning: (1) emotion-cognition, (2) emotion-imagination, (3) cognition-imagination, and (4) emotion-cognition-imagination. As in Chapter 3, a letter ('e' for emotion, 'c' for cognition, and 'i' for imagination) is used to identify each characteristic of practical reasoning. Instead of identifying evidence of each characteristic by underlining words, I denote these characteristics after the corresponding sentence(s) or statement(s).

Emotion-Cognition (E-C). 'Emotion-Cognition' combines two characteristics of practical reasoning. Evidence of these characteristics in the following responses shows the teacher candidates attending to Monica as well as acknowledging the purpose and impact of the food drive. Seeing the human lives and the situation at hand demonstrate both 'emotion' and 'cognition.' The following exemplar is a written response:

A. I would make sure our students knew exactly why they were donating food, and explain that some people need extra help and there's nothing wrong with that [c]. Make sure the students don't see people who need help in a negative light [e-c]. Reminding Monica that she's not alone and it is OK and normal could strip some of the negativity around the situation she's feeling [e].

The food drive and Monica are both called out in this response. This teacher candidate's rational thinking about explaining the food drive shows 'cognition.'

The teacher candidate also cites Monica's feelings about the food drive demonstrating 'emotion.' The blending of these particular categories was common in the entire body of data, thus aligning with scholars who assert that the way we think affects the way we feel (Garrison, 2010; Nussbaum, 1990).

The second example of 'emotion-cognition' is from a notecard recorded following the case-based discussion:

B. As the student's teacher I would have an individual conversation with the student [e]. I also would address the class as a whole about why they are doing the food drive, who it is for, and that some families use the food shelf as a place to get food and that's OK [e-c]. As a third grade class I think they'd be able to have an open and honest conversation [c].

This response conveys both feelings and thinking by highlighting the student and food drive. The teacher candidate sees value in tending to Monica and points out that families use food shelves – seeing the human lives. This response also focuses on the conditions of the food drive. This teacher candidate shows logic in her reasoning about having a conversation with the third grade class about exploring the situation together.

Emotion-Imagination (E-I). 'Emotion-Imagination' merges two characteristics of practical reasoning. Evidence of these characteristics in the following responses shows the teacher candidates are seeing Monica and imagining ways to change the situation. The following exemplar is a written response:

A. I think an immediate response would be to talk to Monica one on one and acknowledge her legitimate feelings and concerns [e]. Then, school wide, I think it would be important to change how the food drive is structured and talk about the community service in other ways [i]. Can the students plant a garden? Read to younger children? Draw letters for senior citizens? [i] I think that there are many other ways to serve the community without direct donation and that there is real social class divisions when something is structured with the “haves” and “have nots.” [i] Monica’s voice and story, which is common to 1/3 of the school is really being left out [e].

This teacher candidate’s words exemplify ‘emotion’ and ‘imagination.’ Monica’s story matters to this teacher candidate, so does the context of the school community (1/3 of the school on free and reduced lunch). This response highlights creative vision for other ways of serving the community through gardens, reading, and letters. This teacher candidate goes beyond the food drive as a contest, and addresses social class divisions that she sees resulting from the drive. Finally, the teacher candidate’s describes her initial response as “immediate;” this demonstrates consideration of the timing of taking action.

The second example of ‘emotion-imagination’ is from a notecard recorded following the case-based discussion:

B. If I was in this particular situation, I would want to have a discussion with Monica about how she feels. I would want her to know it is OK to feel

uncomfortable and show that I care about her situation [e]. I think I would want to address the organization about changing this “tradition” to being something that more appropriately reflects and considers the population of the school [i].

The student and the concept of change are both embodied in this response. This teacher candidate shows compassion and care for Monica’s feelings. This response also attends to changing the food drive, which has been a tradition at this school, to something more appropriate. This blended response shows a way to pursue possibilities with compassion (Garrison, 2010). ‘Emotion’ and ‘imagination’ combine to show creative care for students.

Cognition-Imagination (C-I). ‘Cognition-Imagination’ joins two characteristics of practical reasoning. Evidence of these characteristics in the following response shows the teacher candidates focusing on both the food drive and imagining ways to change it. The following exemplar is a written response:

A. At first, I wondered if maybe the school could set up the food drive to help families from their own school community. However, then I started thinking that this could offend these families and not end up being much help at all. [c] If this is a huge annual event for this school, it would be difficult to change, but maybe they could change it to be some other activity to help the community in a way all students could equally participate such as picking up trash at local parks/places around the community after the snow melts. [i]

This response highlights the food drive and one way to modify it, and demonstrates logical thinking to find a better fit for the school. “Human cognition is in a large measure imaginative” (Johnson, 1993, p. 215). The teacher candidate suggests doing an activity other than the food drive so that all students could participate, thus showing imagination. This response also includes language to show a shift from an initial idea (“at first”) to a different thought (“then”). The inclusion of timing in this response highlights the presence of time in this teacher candidate’s reasoning.

I did not find a second exemplar response for the category of ‘cognition-
imagination.’

Emotion-Cognition-Imagination (E-C-I). ‘Emotion-Cognition-
Imagination’ blends the three main characteristics of practical reasoning into one category. Evidence of these characteristics in the following responses shows the teacher candidates seeing Monica, recognizing the food drive, and imagining ways to change it. The following exemplar is a written response:

A. I would talk with Monica quietly (in a situation where no one else would hear) and phrase this as a way where people with more resources share them with others. [e] Instead of asking Monica to bring in food, I would offer an equally valued PR/marketing job to her. She could draw pictures, write posters, etc. Another thing could be to remove the reward and instead focus on all students being involved in some form in that classroom. [i] You shouldn’t avoid doing good things because it would

impact some students. A lot of good would be lost then. However, if you think this through ahead of time, there are ways to make all students feel included even without financial participation. [c]

This response embodies compassion for Monica, and both logic and vision regarding the food drive. This teacher candidate shows compassion for Monica and all of the students. This response also addresses the food drive in a logical way (to remove the reward) and in a creative way (to offer Monica alternatives instead of bringing in food). The word 'good' is used in this response providing evidence that this teacher candidate was striving for goodness in this situation.

This example of 'emotion-cognition-imagination' is from the case-based discussion:

B. First I would talk with the student, working to help her feel supported and understood. [e] In my classroom, I would then have a discussion about the variety of economic experiences out there and bring in children's literature that represent poor and working class families. [c] Lastly, I would talk about many ways to serve the community and lead students in service learning. I think I would address it on a school level some that year but advocate more the next. [i]

This teacher candidate's words exemplify all three characteristics of practical reasoning: (1) attention to Monica's feelings, (2) ways to address the situation with the class, and (3) other ways to engage in service learning. This teacher

candidate also is considering how to impact the food drive at the school in both the current and future school years.

Summary. This section reported exemplar responses to illustrate not only the three main characteristics of practical reasoning, but also the four combined categories (see Figure 9). The elementary teacher candidates' words paint a picture of what practical reasoning looks like. The next section will present the prevalence of practical reasoning related to three criteria: practical reasoning characteristics, practical reasoning processes, and case methods.

Prevalence of Practical Reasoning

In addition to the presentation of my qualitative analysis, I also report the results of my quantitative analysis. Which characteristics of practical reasoning are more or less prevalent in the data? The results answering this question are reported in three subsections. The first subsection reports the frequency of each of the seven characteristics of practical reasoning in the data analyzed for this study. The second subsection describes the presence of the seven practical characteristics in the two parts of the practical reasoning process – making decisions and taking action. The third subsection compares and contrasts making decisions and taking action (practical reasoning) related to the two case-based pedagogies employed in this study – written case analysis and case discussion.

Characteristics of practical reasoning. The characteristics of practical reasoning are evident in the data to varying degrees. Figure 11 reports the

prevalence of the characteristics of practical reasoning demonstrated by elementary teacher candidates within the entire data set.

Practical Characteristic	Total Number in TC Oral and Written Responses
Emotion	18-26
Cognition	9-17
Imagination	0-8
Emotion-Cognition	18-26
Emotion-Imagination	18-26
Cognition-Imagination	9-17
Emotion-Cognition-Imagination	0-8



Figure 11. Prevalence of practical reasoning characteristics in teacher candidate (TC) responses ($n = 108$).

‘Emotion’ as a stand-alone characteristic was found frequently in the responses; this characteristic is driven by compassion, in this case for the students and/or families. This may be a natural response in an elementary context. The category of ‘emotion-cognition’ was also recurrent in the data. Pairing ‘emotion’ with ‘cognition’ brings together feeling with thinking. Many teacher candidates wanted to help Monica and “fix” the food drive.

In the entire body of responses, the characteristic of 'imagination' had a low incidence on its own, yet a relatively high incidence when combined with 'emotion.' This shows that oftentimes teacher candidates responded with compassion and vision regarding the food drive and its impact on the student(s). Several teacher candidates recommended that alternatives beyond the food drive would have a positive effect on Monica, her family, and/or her classmates.

Making decisions and taking action. The first component of the practical reasoning process is making decisions. Making a decision involves discernment and judgment (Phelan, 2009). The second component of the practical reasoning process is taking action; this involves either doing or not doing something in response to the situation at hand. Figures 12 and 13 report the prevalence of the characteristics of practical reasoning related to making decisions and taking action.

Practical Characteristic	Making Decisions
Emotion	13-18
Cognition	6-12
Imagination	0-5
Emotion-Cognition	13-18
Emotion-Imagination	0-5
Cognition-Imagination	6-12
Emotion-Cognition-Imagination	0-5



Figure 12. Prevalence of practical reasoning characteristics when making decisions ($n = 54$).

In this study, the teacher candidates frequently made decisions – discerned and judged – with emotive and emotive-cognitive lenses. Many responses exemplified compassionate feelings for Monica; these were often combined with logical thinking to arrive at decisions. Some teacher candidates took the growing percentage of students on free and reduced lunch (school context) into account during the decision-making process.

Practical Characteristic	Taking Action
Emotion	6-12
Cognition	0-5
Imagination	0-5
Emotion-Cognition	6-12
Emotion-Imagination	13-18
Cognition-Imagination	6-12
Emotion-Cognition-Imagination	6-12



Figure 13. Prevalence of practical reasoning characteristics when taking action ($n = 54$).

Imagination comes into play when taking action. In this study, the teacher candidates mostly the blend of ‘emotion’ and ‘imagination’ when describing what they would do in response to the situation. The teacher candidates showed compassion and creativity when considering the possibility of changing the food drive at the school. Several responses included specific suggestions for other ways to help the community.

Practical reasoning and case methods. My first research question investigates written case analysis; the teacher candidates read a dilemma case and responded in writing. My second research question explores case-based discussions. The class dissected the same dilemma case in a large group

discussion. Figures 14 and 15 report the prevalence of the characteristics of practical reasoning present in the two pedagogies employed to collect data.

Characteristic	Making Decisions	Taking Action
Emotion		
Cognition		
Imagination		
Emotion-Cognition		
Emotion-Imagination		
Cognition-Imagination		
Emotion-Cognition-Imagination		

0-3
 4-7
 8-11

Figure 14. Prevalence of practical reasoning characteristics in written case analysis ($n = 27$ in each column).

‘Emotion’ and ‘emotion-cognition’ were more prevalent during decision making with written case analysis. This may lead to more appropriate decisions because teacher candidates can take in and process a situation’s particulars with compassion and logic. ‘Emotion-imagination’ is more connected to action; imagining ways to respond may result in actions that fit better with the situation at hand.

Characteristic	Making Decisions	Taking Action
Emotion	3-5	0-2
Cognition	3-5	3-5
Imagination	0-2	0-2
Emotion-Cognition	6-8	3-5
Emotion-Imagination	0-2	6-8
Cognition-Imagination	6-8	6-8
Emotion-Cognition-Imagination	0-2	3-5



Figure 15. Prevalence of practical reasoning characteristics in case-based discussion ($n = 27$ in each column).

The teacher candidates did not draw on ‘imagination’ alone when making decisions and taking action; this characteristic was most often combined with ‘emotion’ and often combined with ‘cognition’ during and after the case-based discussion. ‘Emotion-imagination’ has the greatest difference among the components of practical reasoning. The teacher candidates reasoned with compassion and vision when contemplating action with their peers. Teacher candidates also demonstrated ‘cognition-imagination’ when grappling with their decisions and actions; this may be attributed to teacher candidates’ familiarity with the dilemma case. It also suggests the tendency to employ logic when reasoning with others.

Although this category was infrequent overall, ‘emotion-cognition-
imagination’ was most prevalent in the written responses recorded on notecards
following the discussion. When responding to the prompt, “What would you do?”
there were a few teacher candidates’ whose words contained evidence of all
three characteristics of practical reasoning. This blended category was present
only when referring to action.

Summary

This section reported the prevalence of each characteristic of practical
reasoning in the teacher candidates’ oral and written responses. The teacher
candidates in this study individually responded in writing with emotion when
considering making decisions; this shifted to emotion-imagination when
describing the action they may take in response to this situation. The teacher
candidates’ demonstration of emotion, emotion-cognition, and emotion-
imagination highlights their expression of compassion and/or sympathy for
student(s) in their care. The teacher candidates may feel that they are doing the
right thing by tending to Monica and/or the other students.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined the findings of my study. I put forth exemplar
teacher candidate responses for each of the seven categories of practical
reasoning. I shared the prevalence of the characteristics of practical reasoning
selected from the literature present in the data. I also described the prevalence
of these characteristics in the practical reasoning process – making decisions

and taking action. I further illustrated what practical reasoning looks like when employing two specific case-based pedagogies – written case analysis and case-based discussion.

*Pure reasoning strives to discover what already exists.
Practical reasoning abandons the quest for certainty ...
[it] can be productive, creative and full of life.*

Jim Garrison, 2010, p. xvii-xviii

Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to offer insights into elementary teacher candidates' practical reasoning when they engage with case-based pedagogies. A dilemma case was used to reveal practical reasoning regarding a sensitive topic (socioeconomic class). My analysis of the meanings embedded in teacher candidates' responses describes three characteristics of practical reasoning drawn from the literature: emotion, cognition, and imagination. My discussion of the findings describes how the two components of the practical reasoning process (making decisions and taking action) and the two case methods employed in this study (written case analysis and case-based discussion) occurred in the context of elementary social studies teacher preparation.

In this chapter, I present a deeper sense of what practical reasoning looks like in an elementary social studies methods course. First, I summarize my findings. Second, I situate my findings within previous work in teacher preparation. Third, I consider my findings in relation to two areas: practical reasoning and dilemma cases. This chapter also includes sections on the implications and limitations of this study. The implications are divided into ideas for practice and suggestions for further research.

Findings

My analysis illustrated that the three characteristics of practical reasoning (emotion, cognition, and imagination) I selected from the literature were present in the data, sometimes independently and other times blended with one another. The characteristic of emotion was most prevalent overall while cognition and imagination were evident when combined with emotion. 'Emotion' and 'emotion-cognition' were predominant during the decision-making component of the practical reasoning process. Further, the teacher candidates combined 'emotion' with 'imagination' primarily when describing what, if any, action they would take. Teacher candidates rarely demonstrated the blended category of 'emotion-cognition-imagination.' When evident, this category surfaced more frequently in the case-based discussion as opposed to the written case analysis and was mainly present when referring to taking action.

Previous Work in Teacher Preparation

To my knowledge, scholars have not provided a rich description of what practical reasoning looks like in the context of elementary social studies teacher preparation. Variations of practical reasoning have been studied related to reasoned decision making (Harrington, 1995) and practical knowledge (Lee, 2003). The previous work on practical reasoning in teacher preparation consists of anecdotal accounts (Heilbronn, 2008; Stengel, 2013) and one systematic study related to language arts (Phelan, 2009). Elementary social studies methods courses offer a productive space to investigate teacher candidates'

practical reasoning because making decisions and taking action comprise a significant piece of day-to-day classroom life; further, the situations that require decisions and actions often involve significant social studies concepts (e.g., power, cooperation).

I am not aware of any empirical studies regarding the use of dilemma cases in elementary social studies methods courses. However, researchers have found dilemma cases to be a useful tool in these teacher preparation contexts: (1) an early childhood course (Koc, 2012), (2) a general “Teaching in the Elementary School” course (Harrington, 1995), (3) elementary science coursework (Lee, 2003; Yoon & Kim, 2010), (4) elementary field placements (Levin, 2002), and (5) a university’s teacher licensure program (Whitcomb, 2002). A recent book, *Dilemmas of Educational Ethics: Cases and Commentaries* (Levinson & Fay, 2016) puts forth the value of dilemma cases for a variety of audiences; one recommended audience is teacher education. Elementary social studies teacher preparation offers a place for teacher candidates to grapple with the uncertainty inherent in dilemma cases to help them cope with real world classroom situations.

Elementary Social Studies Teacher Preparation

The following subsections highlight why the findings of this study are necessary to consider in the context of elementary social studies teacher preparation. First, I make a case for integrating practical reasoning into elementary social studies methods courses. Second, I argue that employing

dilemma cases is a worthwhile endeavor for elementary social studies methods instructors. In the 'Implications' section, I explain why sensitive topics fit well with both practical reasoning and dilemma cases.

Practical reasoning. Although weighing decisions and contemplating action are daily occurrences in classrooms, not much attention has been given to studying practical reasoning in elementary social studies teacher preparation. Phelan (2009) asserts: "The reason for nurturing practical reasoning in teacher education is to ensure that aspiring teachers learn to be discerning, to appreciate situations, and imagine possible action" (p. 111). Teacher candidates need practice in developing deep perception of a situation's particulars, as well as genuine deliberation of the situation's constituents (Pendlebury, 1990). They also need to be attuned to goodness to envision virtuous responses. The present study explored elementary teacher candidates' practical reasoning and described making decisions and taking action using three characteristics: emotion, cognition, and imagination.

Making decisions. Responses demonstrating 'emotion' and 'emotion-cognition' were most prevalent during the decision-making component of the practical reasoning process. This highlights the elementary teacher candidates' sympathy and empathy for the student(s) when discerning and weighing alternatives. The responses rarely included "imagination' as part of making decisions.

Emotion. During their first reading of the dilemma case, *A Sensitive Competition*, most teacher candidates' attention went straight to Monica. Their demonstration of sympathy might help a single child, but may fail to make things better for other students. After their second interaction with *A Sensitive Competition*, the object of the teacher candidates' attention shifted from caring for Monica to addressing the larger classroom community. Although all of these responses are categorized as 'emotion,' more than one interaction with the same case may have opened the teacher candidates' eyes to seeing beyond a single character in the dilemma case. This shift could also be related to the interactive nature of the discussion.

Emotion-cognition. The way we think affects the way we feel (Garrison, 2010; Nussbaum, 1990). Many teacher candidates demonstrated 'emotion-cognition' when making decisions about the dilemma case. They showed empathy – “the feeling that you understand and share another person's experiences and emotions” (empathy, n.d.); this ability involves cognition (understanding). The responses in this category are sensitive to the context (food drive) and the humans (Monica and/or other students) involved in the situation. These combined 'emotion-cognition' responses weave logic with compassion.

Imagination. The teacher candidates' tendency to rely on feeling or feeling and thinking may have overshadowed their ability to imagine – “to see the possible in the actual” (Garrison, 2010, p. 77). A reason for the lack of

imagination relates to the nature of the responses themselves. Some of the emotive and cognitive responses to the dilemma case showed a judgmental tone. For example, teacher candidates called out the teacher's lack of immediate action and the school administrators' lack of sensitivity. This evaluative focus may have impaired the teacher candidates' vision, impeding their ability to show more imagination. Educating teacher candidates about practical reasoning may push them to explicitly acknowledge the complementary roles of feeling, thinking, and *imagining* when making decisions.

Taking action. Responses demonstrating 'emotion-imagination' were most prevalent when teacher candidates described the prospective action(s) they would take in response to *A Sensitive Competition*. This draws attention to one of Nussbaum's criteria for distinguishing practical reasoning from rational thinking – the presence of emotions and imagination. Reasoning with feeling and envisioning creates space for pursuing possibilities with compassion.

Emotion-imagination. Drawing on emotions *and* imagination brings both the affective and creative into play when taking action. The teacher candidates' responses in this category proposed caring for the students *and* bringing about change through possibilities beyond the food drive. These combined 'emotion-imagination' responses recognized more of the dilemma case's complexity, as teacher candidates were able to move beyond the actual situation. Teacher candidates may benefit from opportunities to discuss possibilities that keep the

best interests of the students in mind, particularly as novices who may not have much experience making changes in school contexts.

Cognition. The teacher candidates' responses when contemplating action did not include much evidence of 'cognition.' While some candidates combined 'cognition' with either 'emotion' or 'imagination,' for the most part logical thinking was more evident during the decision-making component of practical reasoning. This could be due to elementary teacher candidates' inclination toward taking action to care for children. Integrating practical reasoning into elementary social studies methods courses may help teacher candidates to take feeling, imagining, and *thinking* into account when taking action.

Combining characteristics matters. As an outcome of my study, I conclude that combining 'practical' characteristics (emotion, cognition, and imagination) is a stronger indicator of practical reasoning than is a singular characteristic or two-characteristic response. Blending two or ideally three characteristics can help teacher candidates seek goodness when making decisions and taking action. For example, combining 'emotion' and 'cognition' makes better decisions possible because the reasoning process involves empathy. Teacher candidates who combine characteristics might reach an appropriate decision and/or action because they can access more than one way to deliberate. Teacher candidates who respond with more than one practical reasoning characteristic arrive at better decisions and actions. The blending of

feeling, thinking, and imagining has the potential to empower teacher candidates to pursue goodness.

Elementary classrooms call for teachers who are guided by goodness. Wakeham (2016) describes “competing goods” (p. 44) as the various individual(s) and group(s) present in a classroom situation. The competing nature of alternative responses demands knowing what is ‘good’ in the situation at hand. ‘Good’ for elementary teacher candidates is what maximizes student learning and fosters relationships with students and families. In the context of elementary social studies teacher preparation, goodness refers to elementary teacher candidates’ sense of virtues (e.g., care for students) and their capacity to use reasoning to reach multiple goals (e.g., both particulars and the big picture). The practical reasoning process (making decisions and taking action) provides a structure in which to arrive at normative ends. The practical reasoning process affords teacher candidates a way to interact with their assumptions and desires, consider their alternatives, and weigh the consequences of their actions or non-actions.

Summary

Practical reasoning is worthy of attention in elementary social studies teacher preparation because it provides teacher candidates with a process to support them when making decisions and taking action. This study focuses on what practical reasoning looks like based on evidence of three characteristics (emotion, cognition, and imagination) in teacher candidates’ responses to a

dilemma case. Tapping into emotion, cognition, and imagination may help teacher candidates to better address the context and complexity of a particular situation. Thus, it is wise to integrate practical reasoning into elementary social studies methods courses.

Dilemma cases. Although case methods have been utilized in the field of education, a gap exists in the research within the context of elementary social studies teacher preparation. Scholars who have studied case methods often focus on teacher cognition and/or reflection. I applied case-based pedagogies to access teacher candidates' practical reasoning. Written case analysis and case-based discussion provide spaces for grappling with the virtuous question: "What should I do?" Lundeberg and Fawver (1994) contend, "Although students [teacher candidates] seek certainty, they learn from case discussions that there are no easy answers and develop an appreciation for tolerating ambiguity" (p. 295). Dilemma cases provide a means to help elementary teacher candidates cope with uncertainty, particularly when facing "competing goods" (Wakeham, 2016, p. 44). Case-based pedagogies offer a powerful way for teacher candidates to analyze and discuss authentic classroom situations.

Written case analysis. The responses from the written case analysis are predominantly emotion-laden. Some responses are purely compassionate while others combine feeling with thinking and/or imagining. One explanation for this may be that teacher candidates' written analysis was done individually; also, this was their first exposure to the dilemma case, *A Sensitive Competition*.

Case-based discussion. There was a significant decrease in the presence of 'emotion' as a stand-alone category during the case-based discussion. Teacher candidates moved past their initial tendency to show sympathy to combining compassion with logic or vision. The combined category 'cognition-imagination' surfaced more frequently than during written analysis. This may indicate that discussing the dilemma case with peers resulted in more suggestions for ways to change the food drive. Some responses during the case-based discussion demonstrated a judgmental tone, particularly at the beginning of the group's analysis. Teacher candidates may often be asked to problematize a situation, or view it with a critical eye. The discussion built to a response containing attributes of 'emotion,' 'cognition,' and 'imagination' before tapering off with statements demonstrating 'emotion' or 'cognition' at the conclusion.

The blended category, 'emotion-cognition-imagination,' was most evident in the teacher candidates' written responses to "What would you do?" following the case-based discussion; this was the third analysis of the same case. The frequency of exposure and the opportunity to dissect the case with peers and listening to different perspectives may have opened up doors to blending all three characteristics. About half of the teacher candidates stated an intention to speak to the school's administrator(s) regarding the food drive in their final interaction with the dilemma case. The whole class discussion allowed for different layers in the situation to come to light.

Case methods complement practical reasoning. As an outcome of this study, I conclude that case-based pedagogies complement practical reasoning. The practical reasoning process is tangled, not linear; dilemma cases include competing options, not a correct answer. Both practical reasoning and dilemma cases call for interpreting and responding within complex contexts. The teacher candidates blended emotion, cognition, and imagination to a greater degree when describing possible actions following the case-based discussion than in the other data sources. Teacher candidates should benefit from having had the opportunity to practice engaging with authentic dilemma cases in elementary social studies methods courses when, as full-time teachers, they are faced with the reality of having to ‘do something’ in response to daily situations in their own classrooms.

Summary. Case-based pedagogies can bring real world classroom situations into elementary social studies methods courses. Dilemma cases – narratives containing unexpected circumstances for which multiple possibilities for making decisions and taking action exist – can help teacher candidates discern the particulars of a situation and decide on an appropriate action. Dilemma cases help teacher candidates *cope* with their uncertainty when facing complex situations found daily in the elementary classroom. If teacher candidates can practice analyzing dilemma cases, they may grow out of their tendency to look for a correct (strategy-based) answer and shift toward a good (practical reasoning-based) way to respond to the situation at hand.

Implications

In the present study, I sought to fill gaps in the research related to practical reasoning and case-based pedagogies in elementary social studies teacher preparation. Taking up practical reasoning offers a pathway for teacher candidates to make *appropriate* decisions and take *fitting* action. Intentionally employing case-based pedagogies in elementary social studies methods courses provides teacher candidates with insights into coping with the uncertainty they will face in their future classrooms, particularly related to sensitive topics. This section addresses implications for practice and for further research.

Practice. I offer two implications of the present study for elementary social studies teacher preparation. First, I recommend sensitive topics as a matter to take up using dilemma cases to exercise practical reasoning. Second, I advocate for the use of practical reasoning language by elementary social studies methods instructors.

Sensitive topics. To my knowledge, scholars have yet to offer the field of elementary social studies teacher preparation a way to help teacher candidates navigate sensitive topics. Darwin (2012) utilized cultural and political vignettes (CPV's) about sensitive 'issues' in a literacy course comprised of practicing elementary teachers. Other studies related to sensitive topics such as race and war provide strategies to use in elementary classrooms, including discussions (Bolgatz, 1995) and picture books (Suzuki et al., 2015). Much of the previous work related to sensitive topics relates to secondary contexts and planned

curriculum instead of unexpected situations in elementary classrooms.

Addressing sensitive topics in an elementary methods course makes a direct connection to situations elementary teacher candidates encounter in their practicum classrooms. Because teacher candidates often do not observe explicit social studies instruction during their practicum experiences (e.g., Mathis & Boyd, 2009) the sensitive topics children bring into the classroom may provide a way to have authentic conversations regarding significant social studies concepts, such as culture and identity. Addressing sensitive topics is necessary to connect elementary teacher candidates with social studies in real and meaningful ways.

Elementary social studies methods course instructors can utilize case-based pedagogies to tackle sensitive topics in the classroom. Teacher candidates need multiple opportunities to grapple with dilemma cases in order to consider the context and complexity when navigating sensitive topics. Using dilemma cases in social studies methods courses can help teacher candidates “to work through uncomfortable situations and come up with alternatives” (Teacher Candidate, 2014). Dilemma cases regarding sensitive topics offer teacher candidates practice with practical reasoning – making decisions and taking action. Explicitly addressing practical reasoning holds potential for creating more confident elementary educators.

Language. One way to integrate practical reasoning into elementary social studies teacher preparation is to use practical reasoning language, including its characteristics (emotion, cognition, and imagination) and

components (making decisions and taking action). Also, the thoughtful and intentional use of 'good' and 'right' may shift the focus away from the technical (e.g., strategies, products). Phelan (2009) states: "Ironically, this culture of over-reliance on strategies leaves aspiring teachers ill-equipped to deal creatively with uncertain or unexpected circumstances, with the exercise of power, or the ambiguity surrounding what constitutes 'good' judgment and action in any particular classroom" (p. 95). Making practical reasoning apparent and then transparent gives candidates insights into coping with the challenges of responding to sensitive situations with goodness, not correctness, thus focusing on the humanness of classroom interactions.

Further research. I propose two avenues for future research in the field of elementary social studies teacher preparation. First, I pose questions related to future study of practical reasoning. Second, I put forth some recommendations for research related to case-based pedagogies.

Practical reasoning. As a result of my study, I have several questions to prompt future research. First, how might researchers judge the goodness of each response? This study captured what practical reasoning looks like in an elementary social studies methods course, but did not rate the *goodness* of each response. Recall that goodness in this context is what is good for student learning and relationships with students and families. Second, does having multiple characteristics represented in a single response make the teacher candidate more capable of enacting practical reasoning in the classroom? The

present study did not offer evidence to assess teacher candidates' capacity for using practical reasoning in actual classroom situations. While candidates may have the capacity to engage in good practical reasoning with reference to a dilemma case presented in a university classroom, do they *use* similar capacities in real classroom situations? Third, does better decision making (perception and deliberation) lead to better action taking (response)? This study does not provide insights into how the teacher candidates navigated the components of the practical reasoning process. Finally, what might the practical reasoning of secondary social studies teacher candidates or practicing teachers look like? Studying these groups of teachers may be a worthwhile next step; insights into decision making and action taking within social studies education and/or in teaching practice holds potential for teacher preparation and professional development regarding practical reasoning.

Case-based pedagogies. Following are three areas for future research involving case-based pedagogies: (1) effect on practical reasoning, (2) impact of using dilemma cases to address sensitive topics, and (3) development of cases for different settings and purposes (Merseeth, 1996). Researchers can study case methods and practical reasoning to assess any influence that using dilemma cases may have on slowing down teacher candidates' judgment and action. Elementary social studies methods instructors can look at different sensitive topics through dilemma cases and determine whether or not these narratives can help teacher candidates navigate uncomfortable and complex classroom

situations. Scholars can collaborate to develop dilemma cases for elementary and secondary social studies contexts; uses of these narratives can be studied.

Summary. Examining dilemma cases written about sensitive topics using the lens of practical reasoning can help teacher candidates to do *good* in their practicum. Intentionally using practical reasoning language can focus teacher candidates' attention on appropriate decisions and actions to fit particular situations. Future empirical studies can support elementary social studies teacher educators to take on the uncertainty faced by teacher candidates with practical reasoning frameworks and case-based pedagogies.

Limitations

In this section, I acknowledge the limitations of the present study. The data collection process was impacted by my facilitation of two case-based pedagogies. The prompts used to collect written and oral data influence the teacher candidates' opportunity to share their reasoning. Although my analysis suggests that case methods may be utilized to investigate teacher candidates' practical reasoning, it only offers a look at prospective thoughts and actions and may not transfer to actual teaching practice.

Data collection. Both case-based pedagogies utilized to collect data have limitations for accessing practical reasoning that warrant recognition. First, the instrument designed to capture written descriptions may have limited teacher candidates' description of their perception of and response to the dilemma case. In future work, I would change the prompt from "Explain your thinking" to "Explain

your reasoning.” This modification is a better way to access practical reasoning as the prompt does not lead respondents to the characteristic of cognition by using “thinking.” Also, Zhang, Gino, and Margolis (2014) suggest using “could” questions because they tend to generate more diverse and creative responses to dilemmas (Wakeham, 2016, p. 45). I would change the language on the data collection instrument from “would” to “could”. Instead of asking “what, if anything, would you to?” I would ask, “What, if anything, could you do?” (see Appendix I).

For the case-based discussion, I realized the need to be consistent with the prompts used for the written case analysis to assess making decisions and taking action. Another limitation in my study was timing; time constraints precluded me from discussing taking action with the whole class. Instead, I asked the teacher candidates to record their prospective actions on notecards, which I used as a source of data. In addition to being time intensive, facilitating case-based pedagogies, including case-based discussions, requires practice (Moje & Wade, 1997, p. 705).

Despite this study’s limitations, the findings represent a contribution to the literature in elementary social studies teacher preparation. First, to date, I know of no other studies that seek to illustrate what the characteristics of practical reasoning look like when elementary social studies teacher candidates engage in case-based pedagogies. Second, I am not aware of any previous studies that employ dilemma cases to address sensitive topics in an elementary social studies methods course.

Conclusion

My ultimate aim is to bring attention to practical reasoning through the use of dilemma cases based on sensitive topics. My study described elementary teacher candidates' practical reasoning using case-based pedagogies; my findings may influence teacher educators' inclusion of this type of reasoning and way of instruction into an elementary social studies methods course. Practical reasoning and dilemma cases have the potential to help teacher candidates cope with uncertainty, particularly related to sensitive topics that inevitably arise in day-to-day classroom life. With its challenging, contextual, and complex nature, practical reasoning asks elementary teacher candidates to consider and pursue goodness in their teaching practice.

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APPENDIX A

Sensitive Topics Definition (created on 2/6/14)

Sensitive topics are topics that may make people uncomfortable; these topics may involve varying opinions or ideas about how society should be. People may have strong emotional connections or adverse responses to sensitive topics.

There is not a “right” way to handle a sensitive topic; discussion and acceptance of differences are key, not necessarily agreement or a change in one’s viewpoint.

APPENDIX B

Dilemma Case Assignment Overview

Rationale

The purpose of this assignment is to provide an opportunity for you to analyze and synthesize your thoughts and experiences related to a dilemma that occurred in your placement classroom related to a sensitive topic. The case method pedagogy will be used to help you think about the dilemma you choose to study (see stages below). Addressing sensitive topics is an important aspect of social studies education.

Minnesota Standards for Effective Practice

Working through a dilemma case meets several Standards; the following will be the focus of this assignment:

Standard 3: Diverse Learners – A teacher must understand how students differ in their approaches to learning and create instructional opportunities that are adapted to students with diverse backgrounds and exceptionalities;

Standard 5: Learning Environment – A teacher must be able to use an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create learning environments that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

Stages of this task:

- A. Create a definition of sensitive topics (done in class).
 - B. Record dilemmas as they occur in your placement classroom and choose ONE to study; describe this case in writing using the guidelines below and post on Moodle.
- *Due by**
- C. Each case will be discussed in class using various formats between -- and --.
 - D. Reflect on your dilemma following our class discussion and find a resource related to your case using the template on the Moodle site. **Due by**

NOTE: The template and rubric for the reflection will be posted on our course Moodle site.

Dilemma Case Description

Guidelines for description of dilemma case:

1. Briefly describe your placement classroom context;
2. Write a narrative of the interaction;
3. Your summary may or may not include how the situation was handled.

Example: *My placement classroom is located in a K-5 school in St. Paul that has a diverse student population. In my 3rd grade classroom, we have a daily Morning Meeting, but sensitive topics are rarely discussed as a whole class. One day . . . describe your dilemma.*

Source: Whitcomb, J.A. (2002). Composing dilemma cases: An opportunity to understand moral dimensions of teaching. *Teaching Education*, 13(2), 179-201.

APPENDIX C

Large Group Discussion Prompts

(1) Think about the content of the *sensitive* dilemmas faced by the members of your group:

a. Share one take-away about how you might respond to difference in a classroom:

b. Share one take-away about how you might respond to families about a sensitive topic:

(2) Think about your initial reactions to your peers' dilemma cases. Did any of your thoughts change during the conversation? If so, describe how this may have affected your judgment.

(3) What are some questions raised by the dilemma cases you discussed?

(4) Think about the role of **context** in the dilemmas you discussed in your group. How might the context affect whether or not a situation is perceived as *sensitive*?

(5) Other questions or comments for the large group:

APPENDIX D

Sensitive Topic Dilemma Reflection

Take a few minutes to reflect on your dilemma following our class discussion of your case. Wait a few days and then respond to the following prompts. Write your thoughts up in narrative form and save as a Word document. Post your document on our course Moodle site by (date).

Step 1: Describe your initial response to the dilemma that occurred in your classroom and explain your thinking.

Step 2: Explain any insights you gained from our class discussion regarding your dilemma.

Step 3: Describe how you followed up on your dilemma in your placement classroom.

Step 4: Explain how you may respond to a similar situation in the future.

Step 5: Find one resource that informs your thinking about your dilemma (e.g. book, website, organization). Explain how you may use this resource; you may or may not share this source with students or families (be sure to correctly cite this source).

*Optional background information to research related to your context:

- A. Does your district have a policy regarding controversial issues?
- B. Does your school have guidelines for discussing sensitive topics?
- C. Does your classroom have a routine for talking about sensitive topics?

Grading Criteria:

- depth of your description
- explanation of your thinking
- correct mechanics

APPENDIX E

A Sensitive Competition

My third grade classroom is located in an elementary school where approximately 35% of the students are enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program; this percentage has been growing in recent years. One of the community service projects that has been a strong tradition at the school is an annual food drive that takes place in March. Students are asked to bring in food items and there is a contest by classroom. The class that brings the most items is rewarded with a pajama party. My dilemma focuses on one of my students, Monica - a happy girl who is social in class and well liked by her peers. I often have to remind her to focus on herself or to save her stories for morning meeting. Monica lives with her parents and two younger brothers.

One morning in early March, members of the school's "K" (Kiwanis) Club came to each classroom to announce the upcoming food drive and contest. I noticed that Monica's body language changed and I did not have to give her any reminders about her choices for the rest of the day. Throughout the week, students began to bring in items for the "food drive" box provided for our classroom. The excitement grew as the date for the end of the drive drew near. Monica did not share in this anticipation. I thought about pulling her aside to talk to her, but the reason for her withdrawn behavior surfaced in her weekly journal. As I was reading her response to the prompt of the week – "How might you help in your community?" – Monica wrote, "I wish the stupid school did not have a

contest to bring in food. My mom and I go to the food shelf now.” I had to re-read this sentence; I had no idea that this was part of Monica’s experience. How should I respond to Monica in our interactive journal? I thought back to any signs of a change in her family life. She did not exhibit any of the signs of poverty I remember discussing in one of my college courses – dirty clothes or clothes worn for multiple days, same shoes that often seemed small, poor hygiene. I began to think about how excited my class was about the food drive, yet how sad Monica has been the past week. I realized that I needed to think more about this tradition at the school and how it might affect students. Monica was brave to write about it, but how many students were not so bold? It had not occurred to me that some students are recipients of the same food they are asked to bring to school to be participants in the food drive. I wondered whether other students in the school were also having feelings like Monica and what I should do about it this year.

APPENDIX F

Pilot Study Instrument

Sensitive Topic Dilemma

Name _____

Scenario 1: My third grade classroom is located in a K-5 school in a suburban setting. One day during work time, I overheard some students teasing a boy about the fact that his parents are both males. One of the students said, "You're going to end up just like your dads, a big faggot!"

Reflect on this scenario by responding to the prompts below.

A. What would you do at the time you witnessed this interaction?

Explain your thinking.

B. What would you do, if anything, later?

Explain your thinking.

Scenario 2: My second grade classroom is located in a school in an urban setting. One day during snack time, I witnessed some students teasing a girl about being an atheist. One of the students said, "I heard that you don't believe in God – you know what that means don't you? You can't go to heaven."

Note: Scenario 2 was presented with the same set of prompts at the end of the semester.

APPENDIX G

Dissertation Instrument

Sensitive Topic Dilemma

Code _____

Describe your reasoning related to this situation by responding to the prompts below.

A. What are your initial thoughts about this situation?

Explain your thinking.

B. What would you do, if anything, to respond to this situation?

Explain your thinking.

APPENDIX H

Pre-Case Discussion Prompts

Read "A Sensitive Competition" and record your thoughts to reference during our whole class case-based discussion:

(1) What is going on in this case? Summarize aspects of the case that you think are important to understanding it.

(2) What are some of the issues that come up for you in this case? What are some questions this case raises for you?

(3) Why do you think it is important to raise the questions, concerns, or issues you wrote about in question No. 2?

(4) What are some ways to approach this case with children?

(5) To follow up with the content of this case in class . . . What materials would you use? What order would you do things in? What examples would you give?

APPENDIX I

Revised Instrument

Sensitive Topic Dilemma

Code _____

Describe your reasoning related to this situation by responding to the prompts below.

A. What are your initial insights into this situation?

Explain your reasoning.

B. What could you do, if anything, to respond to this situation?

Explain your reasoning.