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WHOSE HISTORY?: EXPANDING PLACE-BASED INITIATIVES THROUGH OPEN COLLABORATION

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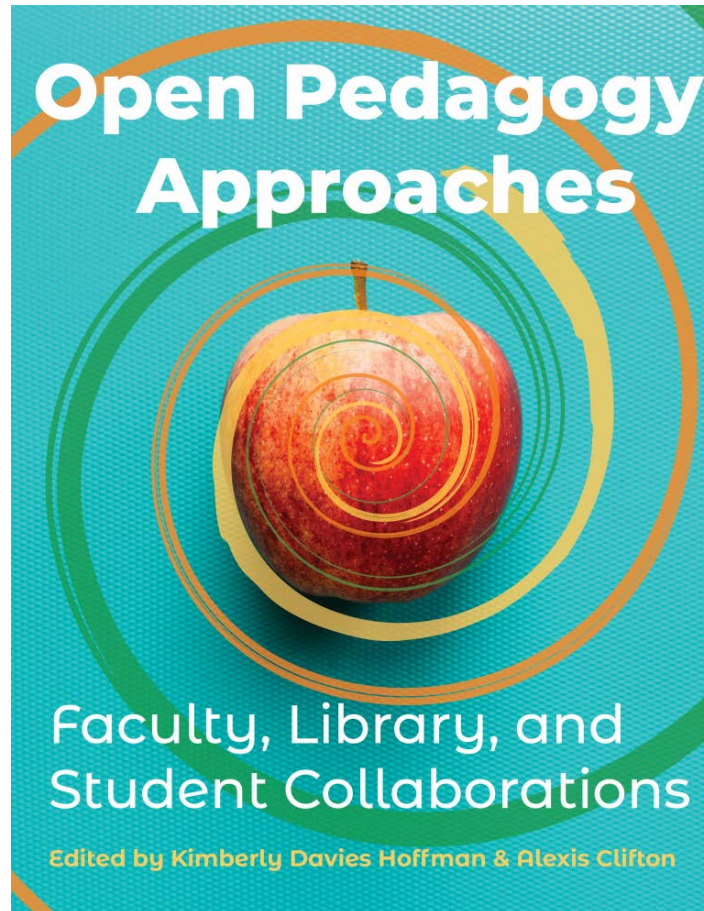
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OPEN PEDAGOGY APPROACHES: Faculty, Library, and Student Collaborations



Edited by KIMBERLY DAVIES HOFFMAN and
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WHOSE HISTORY?: EXPANDING PLACE-BASED INITIATIVES THROUGH OPEN COLLABORATION

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Project Overview

Institution: [The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley](#)

1. Stephanie Anckle, formerly of the College of Education, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, is now at the Marietta College Education Department, Marietta College. Sean D. Visintainer, formerly of the College of Education, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, is now at the University Library, California State University San Marcos. Kristen M. Weischedel, formerly of the University Library, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, is now at the Paul V. Galvin Library, Illinois Institute of Technology. We have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

Institution Type: public, research, undergraduate, postgraduate

Project Discipline: Education

Project Outcome: place-based lesson plan repository

Tools Used: Omeka, Wayback Machine

Resources Included in Chapter:

- Sample Lessons and Lesson Plans
- Lesson Plan Template

2020 Preface

The first half of 2020 has brought two momentous challenges to the United States in the forms of the COVID-19 pandemic and the nationwide community movements against police brutality and institutionalized racism. Our project, *Whose History?*, necessarily looks different with the challenge of the pandemic in mind, while the protests make the project just plain necessary, now more than ever.

Regarding COVID, our institutions are grappling with the same issues as others across the country, and these questions resonate at the departmental and project levels as well. How do we facilitate collaborative group projects while keeping our students, staff, and faculty safe? How do we prevent materials that would be used by multiple students, and handled by library staff, from infecting others? How do we guide our students from a distance, and prepare our teacher-candidates for classroom settings that will by necessity look very different from what they did in 2019, in ways that we probably haven't even envisioned yet? Distance learning tools and digitization can help, but there are too many variables still unknown, too many inherent risks in doing things as they were, to not radically reimagine the logistics of the project. We don't at this time have the answers.

In spirit, however, *Whose History?* remains very much the same, and in light of the recent nationwide protests, more imperative than ever. The driving ethos behind *Whose History?* is to empower students to use local history materials for the creation of OER representative of their

communities. Given the intense erasure and invalidation of BIPOC and other marginalized peoples, very much a feature of our Eurocentric culture, this project is especially important. While our public spaces are being emancipated through the removal and destruction of statues dedicated to the perpetuation of white supremacy, our intellectual and educational spaces need to be similarly reckoned with. *Whose History?* is one attempt to tell the stories of overlooked and erased communities and build inclusive histories. While this project is an important start, we recognize much more work needs to be done within both educational and archival spaces. We look forward to meeting this challenge in the years to come.

—Sean, Stephanie, & Kristen

Texas’s Rio Grande Valley (RGV) population is predominantly Tejano (Texans of Hispanic ancestry). It is a region undergoing rapid growth, transforming from a rural farming and ranching region to a conurbation of municipalities stretching along the Rio Grande River, from Brownsville to Roma. Home to 1.2 million people, by 2050 the population of the RGV is projected to be greater than 2 million (Hoque et al., 2014).

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) is the RGV’s foremost higher education entity. Formed in 2013 from two legacy institutions, UTRGV’s 2018 enrollment was 28,644 students, with 87.8% of students identifying as Hispanic (University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, 2018). UTRGV aims to be the nation’s first “B3” institution—bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate (University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, 2016, p. 15).

UTRGV’s Teaching and Learning (T&L) program is a key producer of Latinx school teachers in the RGV, Texas, and beyond. UTRGV Library’s Special Collections² (SC) acquires, preserves, and makes rare and unique documents related to the culture and history of south Texas accessible to researchers. *Whose History?* project facilitators include a T&L faculty member and two librarians: the Head of Special Collections and the Digital Archivist. The T&L faculty member guides lesson plan creation using place-based education (PBE) pedagogical practices, while the librarians assist with teacher-candidate research and the online publication of select lesson plans.

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are standards which quantify learning expectations for Texas

2. The words “special collections” and “archives” are sometimes used interchangeably. For clarity’s sake, archives has not been used in this chapter except for a few circumstances where using special collections may confuse more than clarify the intent of the writing.

K-12 education, or “what students should know and be able to do” (Texas Education Agency, 2010, Para 1). Chapter 113 of the TEKS designates areas of emphasis for the study of Texas social studies, taught in the fourth and seventh grades.

In Texas, over 28 million people live across the 17 Texas geographic subregions, one of those being the RGV (Butler, n.d.; U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Providing adequate representation of each subregion with TEKS standards is difficult. There are only four subjects related to the RGV listed within the TEKS: the Battle of Palmito Ranch, Texas’s Coastal Plains, the Karankawa Indians, and the League of United Latin American Citizens. Another area of study, people, face a similar problem. Of the 91 individuals mentioned in the TEKS and covering Texas’s prehistory to present-day, four are significant to the RGV:

- Chelo Silva, singer
- Henry B. González, judge
- José de Escandón, colonizer
- Raul A. González, judge

Within the TEKS standards that address individuals’ contributions to Texas history, neither Hispanics nor women are represented to numbers reflective of their distribution in Texas. Hispanics make up 39.6% of the state’s population, but are represented in 20.9% of the TEKS standards. Women consist of 50.3% of the population of Texas, but are only 17.6% of persons mentioned in the TEKS.

Whose History? intends to address the RGV’s lack of representation within the TEKS. Helpfully, the TEKS contain the following verbiage:

To support the teaching of the essential knowledge and skills, the use of a variety of rich primary and secondary source material such as documents, biographies, novels, speeches, letters, poetry, songs, and artworks is encouraged. Where appropriate, local topics should be included. (Texas Education Agency, 2010, sections 113.15(a)(2) and 113.19(a)(2))

This language provides guidance for educators to address the lack of representation within the TEKS, and *Whose History?* provides the tools. UTRGV’s Special Collections are used as a springboard for creating open access textbook supplements with the aim of fostering broader representation in classrooms throughout the RGV and Texas as a whole.

“Open” as a Guiding Philosophy in *Whose History?*

By building resources for Texas educators through the creation of open lesson plans, *Whose History?* increases the visibility of Tejanos and the RGV within Texas curricula. It addresses an OER-adaptation of Siyali

Ramamrita Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science:³ "Every student their educational resource" (Anderson et al., 2019, p. 5).

Whose History? empowers teacher-candidates to increase their communities' representation by making the teacher-candidates "Students as Producers," (Watling, 2012, p. 2). Students as producers is a research-oriented style of teaching and learning "where students learn about research processes, and where the curriculum emphasises the ways by which knowledge is produced, rather than learning knowledge that has already been discovered" (Neery, 2009, as cited by Watling, 2012, p.2).

Gruenwald (2003) found that experiential learning can increase student engagement. High teacher-candidate engagement combined with guidance from project facilitators enables high quality lessons within *Whose History's* Student as Producer ecosystem. The T&L faculty facilitator assists teacher-candidates with clarity of writing, structure, and adherence to PBE practices. Additionally, the resources the students use for their research are curated by the librarians, ensuring that the students have a solid, logical underpinning to their lesson plans. As the 2016 Pew Research Center Study into public libraries notes, "there is a growing sense that libraries can help people decide what information they can trust" (Horrigan, 2016, p. 3). Even though not all OER are created equal, and there can be varying levels of quality (Hilton et al., 2019), the very act of providing authoritative resources to teacher-candidates helps them design quality lessons.

Time is another barrier to the adoption of OER in classrooms (Anderson et al., 2019). If resources covering a subject are unavailable, they must be created. Student producers and library publishers building OER save educators time creating their own resources and increase OER adoption in K-12 classrooms.

Whose History? also enables open access, rights, and use by making resources freely available over the internet. Openness in these contexts will be considered later in the chapter.

Place-based Education (PBE)

Whose History? also approaches open student-led learning through the use of place-based education (PBE), a pedagogy which is well-suited for the project. PBE is an interdisciplinary approach that supports understanding local communities and their resources. Gruenewald (2003) defines PBE as a community effort to reconnect the process of education, the impact of enculturation, and human development to the well-being of community life.

Place is an essential aspect of human development. Young people use landmarks, customs, and local practices to understand the relevance of community in their lives (Dixon & Hales, 2013). The connection

3. Dr. Shiyali Ramamrita Ranganathan was one of the most influential thinkers of 20th century librarianship. His Five Laws of Library Science is one of the foundational texts of the discipline, and learned in library science programs the world over. Ranganathan's five laws are: 1) Books are for use, 2) Every reader his/her book, 3) Every book its reader, 4) Save the time of the reader, 5) The Library is a growing organism (Ranganathan, 1931).

between place and learning helps young people understand the experiences provided by their immediate communities (Nissley, 2011). Embedded in the PBE approach is the desire to help learners connect with their local environment (Hess, 1981). Since communities directly impact one's environment, PBE helps students develop meaningful learning experiences (Dixon & Hales, 2013).

PBE fosters opportunities to develop social and cognitive skills. As learners develop an understanding of the history and resources connected to their locales, they sustain and support their communities. This is especially true at UTRGV where the teacher-candidates' ancestral history is often grounded within the Rio Grande Valley, and teacher-candidates use the Library's Special Collections to design lessons relevant to their families and communities. For example, one teacher-candidate designed her lesson on the Edcouch-Elsa school walkouts of 1968, a mass student protest and catalyst of the Texas's Mexican-American civil rights movement. The teacher-candidate's lesson was particularly poignant because it was created during the 50th anniversary of the walkouts and her father was one of the original protesters.

PBE builds connections and communities, and uses those narratives to help learners integrate cultural and regional practices within curriculum and instruction (Sanger, 1997). Teaching through place-based instruction empowers students to analyze local history and culture through multiple viewpoints. Learning community histories and traditions engages students in their ancestral practices. In doing so, learning environments address the impact of enculturation on the schooling experiences of young people. In this sense, PBE dispels the notion that young people are responsible for little beyond their own talents (Smith & Sobel, 2010). As students better learn their communities, they build a consciousness that supports community responsibility and leadership through agency.

Learners also critically examine the political, social, environmental, and economic structures of communities. These practices are especially beneficial to under-resourced, underdeveloped, and overlooked communities (Smith & Sobel, 2010). They also give teachers and students opportunities to learn from community stakeholders, including libraries, which are specified in the TEKS.

Additionally, PBE helps young people connect their life experiences to classroom instruction, addresses curriculum and instruction through a multidisciplinary lens, and structures the community as the foundation for learning. These practices guide learners to become critical thinkers, agents, and community leaders. PBE emphasizes the importance of location as the nucleus for engaging lessons across the K-12 curriculum. Through PBE, teacher-candidates have the autonomy to identify historical issues important to their communities and design lessons based on these learned experiences.

Many students participating in *Whose History?* have gravitated towards topics that speak to them on a personal level. One student heard stories from their father about the historic Edcouch-Elsa Walkout, and was able to find photographs of him within the SC materials on this topic. Another had heard about the long legacy of agricultural work in their family, and discovered upon further research about their family member's leadership in farm unions, even traveling to the state capital to protest wages in the 1960s. Many were enchanted by the nature of South Padre Island, a local vacation spot, and in the process of exploring its natural history, uncovered family histories as well. These personal connections to the resources available

through Special Collections resulted in stronger final projects, and the experience of researching their local histories resonated deeply with the teacher-candidates.

Two teacher-candidates participating in *Whose History?* grew up in the shadow of the citrus industry. Informed by their childhoods, they created lessons about John Shary, the father of the Rio Grande Valley's commercial citrus industry. The teacher-candidates taught their lesson to local students at an elementary school nestled among several grapefruit groves. As the students learned the history of John Shary and citrus in the RGV, they created songs, artworks, and writing. On the final day of the lesson, the students were named honorary "Kings and Queens of Citrus" for the day. They wore crowns, drew John Shary's house (a historical landmark), and sampled fruits and juices, passing judgement as "members of the royal court."

Whose History? Research

For the *Whose History?* project, the teacher-candidates choose a regional place, event, tradition, or person(s), and with the guidance of project facilitators, research that topic and create open place-based lesson plans. Teacher-candidates work in groups of two to four, creating lesson plans for around 30 topics each time that *Whose History?* is enacted.⁴

As PBE puts an emphasis on lived experience, the expectation is that the teacher-candidates are experts on their place. To start, the teacher-candidates identify topics of most value to them and from which they will create lesson plans. Librarians then examine the teacher-candidate selected topics and compile relevant resources. Though project staff assemble relevant authoritative sources, it is the responsibility of the teacher-candidates to decipher the resources' meaning and their connection to TEKS standards.

Teacher-candidates are next introduced to the practice of researching in archives, and familiarized with their related archival resources. Each project cycle, approximately 100 students visit Special Collections for 12 hours over the week of the project's research phase, so materials must be easily retrievable. T&L classes for the research week are held in one of the library's reservable spaces to facilitate the large number of teacher-candidate researchers while safeguarding archival materials. Teacher-candidates are assisted with handling materials (especially rare and/or fragile resources), and project facilitators circulate the room, offering guidance throughout the research process.

PBE by its nature geographically limits topics and steers teacher-candidates into new research territories. To provide some guidance, *Whose History?* focuses on a central question: How can special collections be used to teach history? Many teacher-candidates have not previously undertaken detailed local primary source research. *Whose History?* tests teacher-candidate's research abilities as they are often less comfortable researching with archival resources compared to more familiar printed secondary sources. Teacher-candidates are encouraged to

4. While intended to be undertaken on a semi-regular basis, *Whose History?*'s facilitation is contingent on the workloads of project staff, other ongoing projects, and academic schedules.

utilize primary sources whenever possible, giving them the opportunity to “touch and feel” their history and culture, and establishing the importance of these resources in the research process.

There are challenges and limitations when using archives and special collections for creating PBE lessons. Donation is the primary means of acquisition for many Special Collections departments, including UTRGV’s. People of privilege and power are often sought as donors as they have the finances and capacity to preserve their stories, culture, and legacies. This creates a bias towards the perspectives of influential people and communities appearing within special collections. While UTRGV’s Special Collections adequately represent the Latinx community, there are limited materials covering other BIPOC groups in the RGV including African Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans. Women are lacking representation within the collections as well.

Another related challenge involves institutional prestige, where sometimes faraway institutions may inherit archives of local heroes. For example, poet, philosopher, and writer Gloria Anzaldúa is from the RGV and many of the stories in her works take place there. However, her archives are kept at distant institutions with more name recognition, a difficult journey for local undergraduate teacher-candidates to undertake. Because of these challenges with systemic collecting bias against women and people of color and competition between archives, in a handful of instances, SC has not been able to provide resources for topics that teacher-candidates were interested in researching.

Lesson Plan Creation and Instruction

Lesson plan templates assist teacher-candidates with understanding the components of place-based lessons in social studies for K-12 students. Teacher-candidates include a summary of their lessons with an abstract encompassing the lesson’s overview, purpose, and appropriate grade level. Teacher-candidates address the significance of PBE, the human development theories that guide their lesson, the background of the lesson taught, and the significance of their lesson to RGV students.

The plans also include a traditional lesson with an experiential activity and a standardized test. The assignment is grounded in constructivist theory, which emphasizes the importance of making learning personal to the life of the learner. Teacher-candidates use the process of discovery to learn about their topic in-depth through research and resource evaluation. Learning focuses on teacher-candidates synthesizing knowledge acquired during their research. This assignment engages teacher-candidates and peers with hands-on collaboration in a group setting.

Select teacher-candidates instruct in classrooms, and visit the campus of La Joya Independent School District (ISD) for one week. Instruction is for 55-minute classes, three to four times a day, and when a teacher-candidate is not instructing, they observe their peers’ instruction. A certified teacher is present in each class, and provides support to the teacher-candidates during their instruction. Teacher-candidates are provided a certificate of appreciation by La Joya ISD upon the completion of their lesson plan’s instruction.

Creating Digital Open Educational Resources

Once lesson plans are created, exemplary lessons are published online as OER. Rangathan’s Five Laws #2 and #3 are adapted to OER (Anderson et al., 2019) as “Every student their educational resource,” (p. 5) and “Every educational resource its student” (p. 7). The *Whose History?* digital surrogates increase the openness of resources available to students and enact these ideals.

The publishing platform for *Whose History?*, [Rio Grande Valley Primary Source Guides](#), maximizes the openness of the project by making the lesson plans and their associated digitized primary resources discoverable and searchable by the public.⁵ The Omeka content management system, commonly used to create digital exhibitions and similar resources, was chosen to build and host the publishing platform. Benefits of Omeka include:

- Open-source
- Control over exhibitions
- Customizable layout and graphics
- Individual item cataloging
- Linked data

On the platform, SC staff and student workers create [subject guides](#)⁶ which encompass teacher-candidate produced lesson plans and the primary source materials cited within them (for example the [Edcouch-Elsa Walkouts](#),⁷ [Juneteenth](#),⁸ [Citizenship in the Republic of Texas](#),⁹ and the [Pharr Riots](#)¹⁰). Because as Pomerantz & Peek (2016) note, transparency is an integral part of openness, digitized primary source materials and the philosophy of PBE written from the teacher-candidates’ perspectives are included within each subject guide.

To create subject guides, project facilitators from the Teaching & Learning department (T&L) send Special

5. Currently, the Library uses a hosted Omeka platform, where the Library pays Omeka.net to manage the storage of digital lesson plans and digitized primary source surrogates. Efforts have been started to have a Library-built Omeka instance that would host the Primary Source Guides rather than the hosted instance currently in use. Other non-hosted options have also been explored, though nothing has been implemented at this time. There’s always the chance that the Omeka links used in this article could not be in use in the future, so we’ve provided the Wayback links as footnotes so that the lessons can be accessed by the reader. Please note that the Wayback machine doesn’t store all images – lessons viewed from the Wayback links may not have all images displayed. [This is Wayback link to the Source Guides.](#)

6. [Wayback version of subject guides.](#)

7. [Wayback link to Edcouch-Elsa Walkouts.](#)

8. [Wayback link to Juneteenth.](#)

9. [Wayback link to Citizenship in the Republic of Texas.](#)

10. [Wayback link to Pharr Riots.](#)

Collections (SC) select approved lesson plans. These plans are converted to PDFs, and any associated primary sources are scanned. Student workers upload the digitized resources into Omeka, and create metadata to maximize discoverability with online searching. The metadata creation is guided by a metadata profile which is applied to all materials uploaded by the digitization team. The team includes SC and T&L student workers, who must critically assess each digitized resource and how it relates to its associated lesson plan, and utilize that analysis to describe each item for maximum discoverability. Once the lesson plan, primary sources, and metadata are uploaded into the Omeka repository, the subject guide is built around the materials.

The publishing platform also allows contextualization of digitized materials. A [slave deed from 1839](#),¹¹ for example, is written in jagged cursive and has proven difficult for teacher-candidates to read. SC staff transcribed the document, and placed this transcription within the digitized deed's metadata, effectively making the text searchable.¹²

Spanish has deep roots in the RGV communities which these lesson plans are intended to serve, and relevant source materials are sometimes written in Spanish. Additionally, some lesson plans are bilingual, such as [Hurricane Beulah](#).¹³ Omeka allows for multiple inputs in its Dublin Core metadata fields, facilitating translation by bilingual student workers if needed.

As Mishra states, the “basic premise of OER is that you and I can reuse and adapt them in our context, without seeking further permission from the original copyright holder” (2017, p. 371). Each lesson plan is published with a [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#) Creative Commons license. This license allows for users to reuse and repurpose for educational purposes, while requiring attribution of materials, facilitating both the crediting of these new teacher-candidates and their works, and maximizing the accessibility of these important lesson plans.

To make attribution easier for those using the lesson plans, citations are added to all published *Whose History?* materials. And as the Creative Commons license allows for creative repurposing of the guides, teachers can build upon and adjust these resources as best for their unique classroom environments. The lesson plans are free and open to use, maximizing the accessibility of PBE for all that wish to do so. The project facilitators are responsible for communicating the nuances of the license to teacher-candidates, who have, to date unanimously desired to be published and for their work to be available as educational resources.

Finally, each lesson plan is uploaded to the Internet Archive's [Wayback Machine](#), preventing link rot and preserving the accessibility of the resources, which can be ensured through persistent use (Coble et al., 2014). The Internet Archive is open access, nonprofit, and publicly available. Both Omeka and the Internet Archive are not dependent on proprietary software for access. The use of software agnostic platforms is vital to breaking

11. [Wayback link to slave deed from 1839](#).

12. Due to the teacher-candidate/staff ratio and the level of detail required for transcription, library staff and students perform transcription work.

13. Wayback link to [Hurricane Beulah](#).

technological barriers and making OER more open and portable across devices and formats to meet users where they are, whether that is in a library, classroom, or at home (Anderson et al., 2019).

Libraries As Publishers

The library as publisher model addresses time as a barrier to OER adoption by saving educators time creating needed resources. It also saves time spent in resource evaluation (Anderson et al., 2019). Among eight information sources in a recent Pew Research Center study (Horrigan, 2016), libraries were found most trusted, with 40% of respondents trusting information from libraries “a lot,” the highest ranking available (Horrigan, 2017, p. 9). Librarians are also viewed as a trusted profession (Portland Research Group, Maine State Library, Lockwood, & Ritter, 2016). As such, libraries as publishers lend authenticity to library-created open resources. As Anderson et al. (2019) note, “libraries can incentivize the use of OER by providing institutional support and programs with funding and assistance for the creation, evaluation, and adoption of OER” (p. 12). This library support can be instrumental to lending legitimacy to OER, as they are often perceived as being inferior to commercial products (Hilton et al., 2019).

It is in the best interest from a financial standpoint of institutions and libraries to incentivize and facilitate the adoption of OER. More than \$7 billion is spent each year on textbooks in K-12 institutions (Hilton et al., 2019). Furthermore, teachers spend a significant amount of their personal income to supplement their classroom resources with books, supplies, and additional materials (McWilliams-Abendroth, 2011). The financial burden that textbooks and supplemental supplies have on educational agencies and teachers contributes to teachers abandoning projects due to the financial strain (Latham & Fifield, 1993). School districts resort to expanding the lifespan of books in hopes of assuaging the financial burden that books and supplemental materials have on a district (James, 2013). Savings from OER adoption can be used by schools for other pressing needs, such as educator and curriculum development, and can allow teachers more financial certainty. Additionally, science and mathematics research shows that elementary students utilizing OER do as well as their peers using commercial resources (Hilton et al., 2019; Robinson et al., 2014; Wiley et al., 2012). Given that OER do not harm educational performance and allow savings to be used elsewhere, it makes sense, both in terms of pedagogy and in terms of budgets, for libraries to embrace OER.

Whose History?'s digital lesson plans are intended to be accessible by a broad community including working teachers, researchers, and lifelong-learners. Recently, the Brownsville Independent School District (BISD) received a grant for teaching PBE in local schools. UTRGV Special Collections referred BISD to *Whose History?*'s online resources due to their robust topics and open availability. Additionally, newly certified teachers who were part of *Whose History?* have begun using the project's plans and digital resources in their current classrooms. The use of *Whose History?* subject guides will grow as more students, teachers, and other interested parties embrace and practice their own PBE lessons.

By creating OER and making them accessible to the larger educational community, an important open ecosystem is facilitated. Teacher-candidates, educators adopting their lesson plans, and K-12 students learning

from these PBE lesson plans are exposed to openness as a concept, and OER gain currency as valuable resources. Open production, distribution, and consumption is attained (Mishra, 2017). This is particularly important for teacher-candidates and primary and secondary school students. With familiarization to OER early in their educational and professional lives, continued future use of OER is more likely, strengthening the ecosystem of openness, and perpetuating the production-distribution-consumption OER lifecycle.

Teacher-Candidate Outcomes

Teacher-candidates participating in *Whose History?* see immediate and tangible dividends. They complete the project with a full PBE lesson plan to add to their portfolio and augment their real-world experience.

Teacher-candidates also connect to their personal history as residents of the Rio Grande Valley. The project's framework empowers students to create in-depth lessons about topics important to the RGV, but which are often overlooked in the statewide curriculum. For many teacher-candidates, topics such as the Edcouch-Elsa Walkouts, farmworker strikes, and the Pharr Riots are intertwined with their ancestral and community memory. Since *Whose History?* began, multiple lesson plans have been created around broad subjects such as military veterans, local festivals, and civil rights events. Teacher-candidates have also been influenced by politics and current events. The Texas-Mexico border wall has been a motivation for teacher-candidates to create lesson plans related to local geography and environment, which is expected to be impacted as more barriers are constructed.

To date, 237 teacher-candidates have taken part in the *Whose History?* project, creating 80 lesson plans. Twenty-five lesson plans have been taught by teacher-candidates in local classrooms, and, at the time of this writing, 20 have been published online as freely available resources. The publishing of the lesson plans on the library publishing platform and Internet Archive gives practicing educators in the RGV and across Texas access to rigorously planned lessons that reflect the life and experiences of Tejanos. As more *Whose History?* lesson plans are published, the potential of a new student-created open “textbook” for RGV learners becomes more possible. While not originally something the project facilitators envisioned, it is an outcome that now seems feasible, if still distant.

Giving teacher-candidates the opportunity to teach in classrooms in local school districts is an especially valuable experience; Latinx future educators teach classes composed of mostly Latinx students in these classrooms. These future educators gain real-world experience and their students see representation in both their classrooms and the curriculum. When providing feedback, teacher-candidates have noted the experience as a very positive one, with the hands-on practice provided to them often being the first real classroom experience they got in the program.

Reflections

Whose History? is the first collaboration between Teaching & Learning and Special Collections, and the interdisciplinary nature of library science and education makes this project a natural fit. However, the need for adjustments to *Whose History?* became evident early on in planning. While project librarians were familiar with class-specific learning outcomes, they were new to the pedagogical concepts of place-based education and constructivism. The Teaching & Learning project facilitator had researched with archives, but was unfamiliar with archival best practice regarding access to both physical resources and digital surrogates, and to Creative Commons Licensing. Disciplinary vocabularies were also a complication, as seemingly intuitive words like “artifact”—a physical document to the librarians, but a teacher-candidates’ project outcome to the educator—needed common agreed-upon definitions. A working familiarity of disciplinary approaches and respective vocabularies needed to be engendered between the project facilitators.

Using Special Collections resources to design place-based social studies lessons led by teacher-candidates also posed a few obstacles. Undergraduate students are familiar with retrieving material digitally. However, many of the *Whose History?* resources are only accessible as physical artifacts, often requiring special considerations to use and interpret. Books of cattle brands—hand-drawn and notated governmental records of ownership brands for local ranches and families—are not machine searchable, requiring more scrutiny by researchers. Early on in the project, the librarians realized they needed to better consider the teacher-candidates’ requirements for creating K-12 lesson plans. The focus of many teacher-candidates was finding materials appropriate for their teaching level, while the librarians’ focus on finding authoritative resources did not consider grade-appropriateness. In spite of such obstacles, teacher candidates have eagerly embraced research with rare and unique documents.

The teacher-candidates’ desire to use *Whose History?* to foster community and family engagement has required the involvement of additional stakeholders. Teacher-candidates sometimes create Spanish-language or bilingual lessons, ideal for the Spanish/English language environment in Rio Grande Valley schools. These Spanish-language and bilingual educational materials can require additional support, as many UTRGV students are bilingual but not biliterate. UTRGV’s Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS) edits and proofs Spanish-language university-produced materials including *Whose History?* lessons. CMAS’ participation further reinforces the collaborative effort of *Whose History?* and its support from the campus community.

The opportunity to teach the history and culture of their respective communities, often overlooked and underrepresented in the Texas social studies curricula, creates enthusiasm and “buy in” for the project, and leads to teacher-candidates contributing expansive and detailed projects. In some cases, teacher-candidates have visited additional Special Collections in the region, demonstrating the desire of community members to research, teach, and learn their community history. This desire shows promise for these types of initiatives in the future.

Conclusion

Whose History? facilitates an ecosystem of open production-distribution-consumption. Undergraduate teacher-candidates research local people, events, or topics, and create place-based lesson plans using primary resources from UTRGV's Special Collections. A selected group of teacher-candidates instruct their lessons in local classrooms, gaining experience in educating young learners about local culture and history. High quality lesson plans are published online under a [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#) Creative Commons license, promoting open use and reuse of lesson plans, and giving students a published work for their portfolios. Additional open curriculum content helps educators meet TEKS social studies criteria, saves educators time and money, and binds young learners to their communities, building engagement and leadership.

The RGV continues to grow, and Hispanics are expected to become a plurality in Texas as soon as 2022 (Ura & Hanzhang Jin, 2019). New curricular materials that can be added to and updated as the region changes will add currency and relevance to outdated commercial textbooks, ideally replacing them altogether for use in classrooms.

Finally, decolonizing educational materials through PBE brings much needed representation to Texas social studies. Future teachers look back to impactful people and events, such as the student-led Edcouch-Elsa school walkouts. By creating learning resources that illustrate their communities, they directly impact the historical record. This is an immediate and powerful lesson to convey to future educators and young students who don't often see themselves in their textbooks; not only do people and events bring dramatic change into the world, but they do just that, all the time, all around us. It takes the question framed by the title of this project—*Whose History?*—and turns it into a statement: Our History!

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Feedback, suggestion, or conversation about this chapter may be shared via our [Rebus Community Discussion Page](#).

Appendix A: Whose History? Guiding Lesson Plan

Dear Beautiful Scholars,

Today our class will visit the archives located in the Sharyland room. The goal of this lesson is to learn strategies for teaching research-based history lessons using local artifacts. UTRGV has been the primary archives of artifacts from the Rio Grande Valley. You may view documents of Latinx, Blacks, and women that may affect you in unexpected ways. You are welcome to talk with me or any of the Special Collections staff about any feelings that arise from this exercise. It is time for us as People of Color (P.O.C.) to write our history! This lesson will provide you with skills to teach our history, for our students, and our community!

In Community and Kindness,

Teacher:
Date:
Topic / grade level:
Social Studies Standards/ TEKS:
Lesson objective(s): By the end of this lesson students will be able to (SWBAT)?
ENGAGEMENT The hook – How will you engage the student in the lesson?
EXPLORATION How will you provide hands-on or relatable activities?
EXPLANATION List higher order thinking (HOT) you will use to check for understanding.
ELABORATION How does the information you researched relate to the students' community? How will you introduce new vocabulary concepts?

EVALUATION
How will you assess learning?

Appendix B: Lesson Plan Template

Instrument

Article Title
Authors & Affiliation

Abstract

Essential Question:

Rationale:

Methods:

Theoretical Framework (when applicable)

Keywords: list up to 6 words (Avoid repeating words in the title)

Introduction

The purpose of the lesson

Background

Pedagogy – Briefly mention the pedagogy you will be using for your study. Use Scholarly articles from the UTRGV library

For this assignment

Introduction – What is place-based pedagogy of education?

Significance- Why is place-based pedagogy important for the following:

Methods

Name your lesson

Grade level and population and subject:

5 E-Lesson Template

Subject / grade level:
Materials:
Standards:
Lesson objective(s): 3 lesson objectives for 5 days
Differentiation strategies to meet diverse learner needs: SPED GATE gifted Specific Learning Disabilities ELL
ENGAGEMENT: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Describe how the teacher will capture students' interest. What kind of questions should the students ask themselves after the engagement?
EXPLORATION: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Describe what hands-on/minds-on activities students will be doing.
EXPLANATION: <ul style="list-style-type: none">What questions or techniques will the teacher use to help students connect their exploration to the concept under examination?List higher order thinking questions which teachers will use to solicit student explanations and help them justify their explanations.
ELABORATION: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Describe how students will develop a more sophisticated understanding of the concept. What vocabulary will be introduced and how will it connect to students' observations?How is this knowledge applied in our daily lives?

EVALUATION:

- How will students demonstrate that they have achieved the lesson objective? This should be embedded throughout the lesson as well as at the end of the lesson

Instructional Collaborations**Teaching Local History Reflection Assignment**

Date- 3rd Monday of the Semester

We will meet in the Shary Room

Objective: This lesson will teach you how to design a social studies lesson from research and artifacts.

S.W.B.A.T.: Design a place-based lesson for elementary school students using artifacts housed at the local library.

Reflection questions:

1. Please list your topic
2. Grade level
3. Standards
4. Explain the reasons for choosing your topic (200 words)

Cite the sources you will use

Author [last name first]. (year month day). *Title* [description of material]. Name of collection (call number, identifier or box/folder/item number). Name and location of repository.

Assessments

2 – 3 double-spaced pages

- Multiple Choice Questions
- 10 questions
- Project
- Rubric
- Anchor Video (5 minutes or less)

References/Citations

(Works cited in APA)