Peace Studies in Elementary Classrooms: When, Where and How for Teachers and Students

By

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Abstract

Multiple peace researchers have identified peace Studies as a discipline beneficial to academic and social success. This study attempts to answer questions of where, when and how to infuse Peace Studies into the curriculum by considering the benefits associated with the infusion of Peace Studies in the classroom and exploring the teaching practices of three teachers with Peace Studies degrees. Their practices promote student success by infusing Peace Studies in the classroom explicitly and implicitly in areas related to character development, classroom management and critical thinking.
Key Words:

**Culture of Violence** - includes, but is not limited to: “street crimes, domestic violence, ethnic hatred, environmental destruction, violent media that captures the imagination of children, poor people struggling to survive in structurally violent societies that deny them economic and social security and who rely on the violent underground economy for sustenance, state systems that squander precious resources on a militaristic approach to problem solving, investing in polices and armed forces rather than quality education and social justice, families and schools uses authoritarian tactics to resolve disputes, teaching young people to use force when faced with conflict.” (Harris, Morrison, 2003, p. 10)

**Peace Studies/Peace Education** - Peace Studies and Peace Education are synonymous in that they share the goal of discovering peace. Allison (2013), Peace Studies graduate and teacher explains:

I perceive Peace Studies as Peace Education that manifests in different ways for different ages. For the younger years, it’s about embracing the virtues of peace, positive peace, while also exploring conflict. As kids get older, there can be an integration of negative peace - with a focus on physical, structural and cultural violence. Later, discussions about peace research, feminism and politics can surface. Peace Education/Peace Studies carries with it unique content, but the approach, the pedagogical style is also unique with a focus on dialogue, collaboration and critical thinking. (Allison December 2013)

*Note: Peace Studies and Peace Education will be used interchangeably throughout the study.*

**Scare tactics** - when the term “scare tactics” is used it is to refer to traditional classroom management tactics: yelling, physical violence, embarrassing or humiliating reprimands

**Structural Violence** - “The different allocation of goods, resources, opportunities, between different groups, classes, genders, nationalities, etc., because of the structure governing their relationship.” (Brand-Jacobson, 2002, p.17)

**Feminist Peace** – “Micro-level unorganized violence, such as rape in war or at home” (Groff and Smoker, 1996, p. 107).

**Gaia Peace** – “Gaia-peace theory places a very high value on the relationship of humans to bio-environments systems [...] where human beings are seen as one of many species inhabiting the earth, and the fate of the planet is seen as the most important goal.” (Groff and Smoker, 1996, p. 108).
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

“Peace Studies in Elementary Schools: When, Where and How for Teachers and Students,” is a research study conducted from the perspective of a teacher candidate, who is a Peace Studies graduate, living in Ontario, interested in the effective infusion of Peace Studies in the curriculum. This study involves an exploration of the teaching strategies of Peace Studies graduates who integrate elements of the discipline into the elementary classroom.

This study begins by looking at Peace Studies as a discipline, its definition and its establishment within the world and more specifically Ontario, Canada. It seeks to briefly define and educate about this relatively new discipline and highlight some of the general social and academic benefits of Peace Studies. It references the standards of practice for teachers as outlined by The Ontario College of Teachers to demonstrate the importance of Peace Studies to the profession and the classroom. This study, focused on the teaching strategies of three teachers who are Peace studies graduates, is a resource for teachers who want to enhance peace education in their elementary school classrooms.

Background of the researcher

I graduated from McMaster University with a B.A.H in English and Peace Studies in 2013. My studies in English have cultivated in me an appreciation for the written text and writing. The study of literature and Peace Studies in combination has broadened my understanding of the world and the people in it. My Peace Studies background includes over 60 units of Peace Studies courses that range from the study of peace in Peace Studies, History, Political Science, Labor Studies, Health Studies, Social Science,
Women Studies, Philosophy and Religion. My experience with peace also includes being an active citizen which has resulted in my participation in 1) Engineers without Borders School Outreach Program that seeks to teach students about social injustices and social justice through engineering, 2) the development of curriculum for Micah House (a temporary home for refugees), 3) the networking of Mary Jo Land’s project *Journey of Peace* - that seeks to bring healing through stories to children affected by war, and 4) the creation of *Foodgrab.org* and the *Tivoli Garden* that aim to provide social justice through access to food and natural remedies. Johan Galtung, often referred to as the grandfather of Peace Studies said: “Peace is not something that is given to us, we must choose it” (Ikeda, 2002, para. 12). I hope to give my students the opportunity to discover peace and the choice to participate in the creation of a culture of peace inside and outside of the classroom.

**Motivation for the study**

I entered university with the goal of becoming a teacher. Midway through my degree I was amazed with what I was learning in Peace Studies and I thought to myself why did I not learn this sooner? I felt as though I had been cheated of knowledge. Being able to study peace only at the university level is an injustice to students in elementary and secondary school. Younger students would benefit from exposure to alternative ways of being so they could be more critical of the prevalent culture of violence in our society. As such, it became my goal to pioneer Peace Studies within the educational system.

I proceeded to speak with the head of the Peace Studies department at McMaster University and I was cautioned that pioneering Peace Studies at the elementary level might be a difficult endeavor because some people do not want peace as it can conflict
with the goals of those in power. The head of the department is not alone in this thinking. Joseph and Efron (2005) in “Seven Worlds of Moral Education” say the greatest obstacle for peace education is that “teaching about justice, sustainability, and peace challenges the prevailing world view in the U.S. by promoting values that confront uncontrolled economic development, consumerism, and militarism” (p. 529). This holds true in Canada as well because very few people study peace. For example, since McMaster University established the discipline in 2001 approximately one hundred students have graduated with a Peace Studies degree. Consequently, many people cannot even define peace. Peace is often described as the absence of war (Osborne, 1988, p. 18). M. Kurlansky (2006) in “Imperfect Beings” attempts to provide insight into this phenomenon. He asks readers to imagine a “world that had no other word for war other than nonpeace” and argues that in this world war would not necessarily be nonexistant, but it would be a world where war is regarded as “an aberrant and insignificant activity,” much like peace is today (p.6). To clarify let me provide an example. When I introduced myself to my practicum students I explained my degree and that violence of any kind was unacceptable to me. I then asked the students to write down one thing about themselves that they would like me to know. One male student of this Grade 7/8 class wrote, “I hate peace.” This is a prevalent attitude with most people I encounter (that peace is insignificant) and this connects to Kurlansky’s idea that peace is regarded as an “aberrant and insignificant activity” because we live in a world where war is real and peace is a response to that reality; thus, peace is hard to imagine or to describe beyond the absence of war. Therefore, because much of society has a very limited understanding of the subject it is often feared or disregarded.
Kurlansky agrees that “peace has been marginalized because it is a truly revolutionary idea, an idea that seeks to completely change the nature of society, a threat to the established order. [Peace] has always been treated as something profoundly dangerous” (Kurlansky, 2006, p.5). In addition, those who practice peaceful ways of being are often stereotyped by society as “tree huggers” or “hippies.” I believe it is a deterrence tactic that has served to sustain a culture of violence and the marginalization of peace.

Violence is glorified in our society. Henry Giroux (2004), talking about the American context says the media produces “war fever” that has helped “create a civil society that has become more aggressive in its warlike enthusiasm” (p. 48). This is also true in Canada where war is glorified in the movies that we watch, the video games that are sold, and the cultivation of patriotism in schools. I was horrified when my 8 year-old son, then 6, said to me “war is good.” He said this during the days leading up to Remembrance Day at school. When I asked him why he thought that, he replied, “Why else do we wear poppies?” as a statement and not a question. Because war is glorified there is great support for the cause. Some people are afraid of peace, some people do not think that it is possible; some can barely define it while others seek to minimize its value and as a result it remains an elusive concept.

A few weeks into my education at OISE I realized elements of Peace Studies are already present within schools; for example through, TRIBES, equitable and ethical practices, and aspects of curriculum. Thus, my personal goal changed from pioneering Peace Studies in elementary schools to popularizing peace education within the education system. Teaching about peace is not about indoctrination, but rather about providing society with holistic ways of thinking, and the information about issues and conflicts so
that individuals can make informed, responsible decisions that promote peace and in turn sustainability (Osborne, 1988, p. 24).

Purpose of the study

After studying Mohandas Gandhi’s *Satyagraha* developed during India’s struggle against British imperialism (Holmes & Gan, 2005), I learned that one cannot change the world per say, only him or herself and hope the world changes as a result. Thus, the purpose of this study is to discover where, when and how Peace Studies is being integrated into the classroom to help shape students’ thoughts in a way that promotes a culture of peace through personal, individual actions. This study provides insight on teaching practices that can help students develop their academic and social skills and create learning and living environments where peace is fostered.

My hope is that as a result of this study, 1) teachers who are not currently incorporating Peace Studies into their classroom will see the academic and social benefits of doing so; that educators will see Peace Studies as feasible and that teaching and “doing” Peace Studies does not impede on the already crowded curriculum. For those teachers already incorporating elements of Peace Studies into their curriculum, the purpose of this study is to expand on their repertoire of teaching strategies and reasons for them.

I believe a Peace Studies approach to curriculum is one way teachers can improve their teaching (broaden perspectives, abilities and resources), better respond to their students’ needs by giving them the skills necessary to have better interpersonal relationships, and as a result promote a better future than the one we currently face.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Peace Studies: What is it?

*Peace Studies as defined by higher learning institutions*

Peace Studies became a discipline in the twentieth century with the establishment of the Peace Research Institute in 1959. Johan Galtung, otherwise known as the “Father of Peace Studies,” founded the institute where “research on the conditions for peaceful relations between states, groups and people” is conducted (PRIO, 2007, para. 2). Galtung’s interest in peace education came from his personal experiences with violence while living in Norway and through WWII: “I wanted to find out how all that horror might have been averted; how to change the destiny of all of Europe” (Ikeda, 2002, para. 5). Galtung was interested in studying the causes of violence in hopes of actualizing a culture of peace, a sustainable future.

Following the establishment of the Peace Research Institute, the University for Peace, located in Costa Rica, and mandated by the United Nations in 1980, was established. The mission of the university is:

To provide humanity with an international institution of higher education for peace with the aim of promoting among all human beings the spirit of understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence, to stimulate cooperation among peoples and to help lessen obstacles and threats to world peace and progress, in keeping with the noble aspirations proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations. (UFP, 2012, para. 1)

The idea of a culture of peace gained momentum as McMaster University, located in Hamilton, Ontario established Peace Studies as a discipline in 2001. It is the “third program of its kind in Canada” (McMaster University, para. 2). McMaster University describes Peace Studies as “an engaged discipline, with many faculty members actively
involved in the promotion of human well-being through projects for peace education around the world” (McMaster University, para. 3).

Peace Studies as defined in the 1980s

While researching Peace Studies for a definition by theorists, I noticed many of the books I pulled were written in the 1980s. I wondered why there was so much literature on peace education at this time. It soon became apparent that the 1980s was the height of the cold war during which nuclear warfare had been a serious threat and peace sought by many.

WWII initially ignited a shared idea that peace education should be taught in schools. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, established in 1948, “committed signatories to organize education that will promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, [that] shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace” (Osborne, 1988, p.13). However, there was very little movement in this area between the 1950s and late 1970s and pressure was not applied until nuclear war in North America became a very real possibility. In 1978 the *Special Session of the General Assembly on Disarmament* “urged governments and non-governmental international organizations to take steps to develop programs of education for disarmament and Peace Studies at all levels” (Osborne, 1998, p.13). Osborne (1988) explains that the reasons for the second call for peace education programs in the midst of the cold war era was in part that the nuclear bomb made the possibility of extinction too real (p.14). Secondly, the possibility of a nuclear threat affected the future of children, and led society to be concerned about their future. For this reason it was believed that children should be educated on the matter as few adults were
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willing to take up the subject matter with children on their own (Osborne, 1988, p. 14).

Thirdly, schools were concerned with the development of citizenship, and lastly, Canada accepted the declaration to foster peace education and thought it should fulfill that promise (Osborne, 1988, p. 14).

As programs were being established in the 80’s, educators found that children were having difficulties articulating the concept of peace. Students often described peace as the absence of war because war was identifiable and understood to be the opposite of peace (Osborne, 2008, p. 18-19). Peace educators identify “negative peace” (the absence of war) as an element of peace, but not peace in its entirety. Thus, the work of Jamie Diaz was used to educate students about “positive peace” which includes the existence of human rights, social justice, and respect for the environment and all people (Osborne, 1988, p.20).

In 1981, R.A Hinde and P. Bateson elaborated on “positive peace” by identifying peace education as concerning values and motivation, the institution of war, knowledge of other peoples, interdependence of nations rather than competition, the balance of power, and co-operation (Hinde & Parry, 1989, p.10).

Derek Heater (1984) identifies other aspects of Peace Studies in “Peace through Education.” In his work Heater describes the following three concepts of Peace Studies; the first being of structural violence, the term was coined by Galtung:

Many people […] live in conditions of injustice, domination and exploitation, in which full human personal development is impossible. To call such conditions ‘peace’ is a semantic delusion […] the extreme result of structural violence is in truth death – through starvation, for example. (p. 27)

Second is the concept of praxis – action informed by theory, and third is the concept of conscientization. Conscientization is the understanding of the causes of
structural violence and how to rectify it (Heater, 1984, p. 27). It is interesting that the phenomenon of the 80’s exists today: so much research and literature exists on peace and peace education yet so many know little or nothing about it.

Peace Studies as defined in the new millennium

Peace Studies as defined in the 1980s, is concerned with conflict, the study of war, violence and peace, a call for compassion, positive action and co-operation. Very little has changed in the definition, understanding, or the importance of the discipline over the years.

Scholars Harris and Morrison (2003) in their essay entitled, “What is Peace Education?” describe peace education as a philosophy and skill set (p.9). The philosophy teaches “nonviolence, love, compassion and reverence for all life,” and the skill set includes “listening, reflection, problem-solving, co-operation and conflict resolution” (Harris & Morrison, 2003, p.9). The authors also describe peace education as empowering education in that it equips individuals with attitudes and knowledge to create a safe and sustainable world, to confront violence, its causes and effects and how to implement alternative response to conflict (Harris & Morrison, 2003, p.9). Through Peace Studies individuals discover alternative ways of being that they can choose and act upon – praxis: putting theory into practice.

Dr. James Page (2008) defines peace education in a similar fashion: peace education is the criticism of existing structures and social injustice, a challenge to authority, regards values and ethics, conflict, and human attitudes and behaviors […] (p. 13- 14). In the preface to his book, Page (2008) says he hopes that his work on peace education will service as an effective contribution to the important task of the discipline
Many scholars of peace education speak to the importance of this discipline. In particular, if higher learning institutes and scholars identify peace education as an invaluable discipline, how is it being understood by elementary teachers? What is the incentive to teach Peace Studies to students in these grades, in this day and age?

**Criticisms of the discipline**

A popular criticism of Peace Studies is that it has indoctrinating characteristics (Harris, Morrison, 2003, Page, 2008; Reid, 1984). Dr. James Page (2008) notes in the preface to his book entitled *Peace Education* that his cautious tone is deliberate because one of the problems of peace education is the “element of preaching that tends to infect the enterprise” (p. xvii). In *Issues in Peace Education*, Reid (1984) discusses this criticism too:

> We would all certainly maintain that programs for Peace Education seek to achieve the development of a certain set of values and attitudes in their participants [...] I have suggested before that unless we are ready to accept responsibility for seeking to accomplish value development and attitude change in young people, then at the end of the day, when the assessment is made, even the devil would obtain a top grade in Peace Studies! The charge of indoctrination can in the end only be answered by the examination of the practice of individual classrooms and of the honesty and straightforwardness of the teachers within them. (p.129)

Lastly, Harris and Morrison (2003), speak to the criticism when they explain that studying peace and war can become uncomfortable in the world of academia because professors, especially, are committed to “the notion of value free inquiry,” and some may be concerned with the possibilities of indoctrination when studying peace and war because doing so raises issues that often imply action (p.98). Thus, there is awareness amongst Peace Studies researchers that the criticism of indoctrination exists; however, it is countered with the notions that peace is good and something that we should strive for
(Reid, 1984). In addition it is recognized that all disciplines contain biases and reflect values (Harris & Morrison, 2013).

Why take a Peace Studies approach to teaching?

In this section I focus on three specific aspects of the teaching profession – classroom management, moral education and critically thinking. Firstly, I discuss classroom management as essential to learning and that by integrating Peace Studies into the curriculum teachers can create a better learning environment that will inevitably transcend into larger society. Secondly, I discuss moral education as a duty of the profession and how it contributes to a culture of peace and better classroom management. Lastly, I discuss critical thinking as a skill that is significant to the Ontario curriculum and a prioritized skill for teachers to cultivate in their students. Peace Studies’ provides a framework for critical thinking which will not only benefit the student academically, but socially too.

Classroom management

One important aspect of teaching involves the creation of safe learning environment for students. On April 4, 2013 The Ontario College of Teachers approved the professional advisory, Safety in Learning Environments: A Shared Responsibility. This advisory reminds teachers and all members “that they are responsible for ensuring safe learning environments” (OCT, 2003, p. 3). How is safety defined? Safety is defined as “promoting positive student behavior, bullying prevention and intervention, safe arrivals, reporting violent incidents and developing and implementing equity and inclusive education” (OCT, 2003, p. 3). The Ontario College of Teachers understands creating a
safe environment for learning as important because studies have shown that it improves student success academically:

There is a direct link between success in school and the school environment in which student learning takes place. Students are more able and more motivated to do well and achieve their full potential in schools that have a positive school climate and in which they feel safe and supported. (OCT, 2003, p. 3)

Students who completed the *Teaching Students To Be Peacemakers* program, integrated into English and History units, conducted by Johnson and Johnson (2004), with participants ranging from kindergarten to Grade 9, from eight different schools in two different countries “tended to score significantly higher on achievement (effect size = 0.88) and retention (effect size = 0.70) tests than did students who did not. [These students] not only learned the factual information contained in the academic unit better, they were better able to interpret the information in insightful ways” (Johnson & Johnson, 2004, p. 76). Where students were learning in an environment that promoted peace, grades improved, demonstrating a connection between peace education and student academic success.

However, not all schools have the *Teaching Students to be Peacemakers* program in place, therefore, safe learning environments are often determined by a teacher’s classroom management skills, and teachers are expected to simulate such programs, implicitly, to produce such effects. At the University of Toronto, OISE recognizes this and teaches classroom management skills through TRIBES training. Those who have practiced TRIBES in their classrooms often find that over a period of time:

1) the climate of the school becomes safe, caring and motivational for all,

2) participation in active learning groups leads to higher student performance,
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3) disruptive student problems fade away, giving teachers more time to teach,

4) respect amongst multicultural, multiethnic and diverse student populations increases (Gibbs, 2006, p. X)

The way this is achieved by TRIBES is through four community agreements: attentive listening, appreciation/no put downs, the right to pass, the right to participate and mutual respect (Gibbs, 2006, p.9). If we refer back to the definitions for Peace Studies it becomes apparent that TRIBES implementation is peace education in that TRIBES suggests how a classroom can function – with compassion, respect, co-operation and conflict resolution strategies.

Integrating peace education into the classroom can minimize the time a teacher spends managing the classroom while supporting a safe learning environment for students’ academic and social success.

*Psychological implications of peace education*

When a Peace Studies framework is applied to classroom management, the opposite of traditional “scare tactics,” the cognitive development of students is enhanced as they learn constructive ways in which to behave and interact with other individuals (Hinde & Parry, 1989).

Jean Piaget found that higher order thinking occurs when students are able to manipulate objects and explore the new and unfamiliar (O’Donnell, 2013, p.7). In contrast to Piaget’s theory, Vygotsky found that higher order thinking occurs when students work with competent mentors; through social guidance and co-operative dialogue (O’Donnell, 2013, p.20). In a Peace Studies approach learners are often asked to
“put themselves in another person’s shoes” to fully understand where that person is coming from. Hinde and Perry (1989) say “you become nicer to people as you are able to understand their point of view” (p. 81). When students are asked to role play, and by role play I mean act in ways that may not be common place to them, students are developing their cognitive capacities because role play calls for higher order thinking.

**Moral education**

Teachers are expected by parents, administration and larger society to develop the character of their students through moral education. Dr. Elizabeth Campbell (2003), in her article “The Teacher as Moral Educator” states:

For centuries the concept of the teacher as a moral educator of the new generation has endured as both a stated objective of the professional role and an implicit inevitability of its moral agency […] Moral education […] includes both what teachers as ethical exemplars model in the course of their daily practice and what moral lessons they teach directly either through the formal curriculum or the informal dynamics of the classroom and school life. (p. 47)

Thus, because teachers are in a profession where they are surrounded by easily influenced beings, and entrusted with their care, teachers are expected to act morally and teach morality. Pamela Bolotin Joseph and Sara Efron (2005) in “Seven Worlds of Moral Education,” argue that moral education “rests on the conviction that schooling can shape the behavior of young people by inculcating in them the proper virtues […] That children need clear directions and good role models and, implicitly, that schools should shape character when families are deficient in this task” (p. 525). The authors describe seven modes of teaching moral education: cultural heritage, caring community, peace education, social action, just community, and ethical inquiry. I argue, peace education is an ideal approach to teaching moral education because it is a compilation of the seven modes. For instance, the goal of character education is to pass on virtues accepted by
society as worthwhile (constructive rather than destructive). One way character education has been implemented by schools is by emphasizing a different character trait each month (Joseph & Efron 2005; Alfie Kohn, 1997; Lickona, 1996). Teachers are expected to explain the virtue to their students, teach them what it “looks like” and “sounds like” and to remind students to act in accordance with the virtue (Joseph & Efron, 2005, p. 526). “Virtues of the month” or week are often recognized with extrinsic reward (Lickona, 1996). With character education, educators believe that “it is their responsibility to form character rather than remain indifferent to their student’s moral development […] to infuse character education throughout the curriculum and school environment” (Joseph & Efron, 2005, p. 526). Criticism about this approach to moral education is that it is inauthentic, that it leads students to act in-authentically, and only for immediate reward, which will eventually result in students losing interest in what got them the reward in the first place (Kohn, 1997; O’Donnell, 2013).

In contrast with character education, a Peace Studies approach to moral education has students discover virtues rather than introducing them. Joseph and Efron (2005) explain: “The moral world of peace education stems from an ethic of care that extends beyond the classroom” (p. 528). Peace educators teach conflict resolution, causes of war and prevention, environmental education, global education, and human rights education. Peace educators “aim to create ‘moral sensitivity to others in the immediate classroom [and] concern for local communities and for all life on the planet’” (Joseph & Efron, 2005, p. 529). Through the study of peace students can actually learn moral ways of being indirectly rather than in a forced upon manner like in the character education approach. For instance, in “Violence, the Peer Group and Youth Culture,” points out that when students observe people relating to each other in literary works, text books or films,
they can identify actions that are pleasing or frustrating to individuals, and actions leading up to pleasurable or frustrating situations (Reid, 1984, p. 660). And because it is possible to make these identifications individuals learn more rewarding social habits (Reid, 1984, p. 660). In relation to the classroom, a Peace Studies approach to moral education results in students discovering the consequences of certain actions and alternative ways of being by example. Notice, a Peace Studies approach to moral education has the same goals as character education; the difference being that a Peace Studies approach to moral education has students learn ways of being that are worthwhile from various sources, not just the teacher, and by example rather than just presentation.

**Critical thinking**

Curriculum policy documents include achievement charts that are standard and used throughout the province as a guide for teachers when making judgments about students work. It identifies four categories of knowledge and skill that students are expected to learn, express and be assessed on. Critical thinking is one of those skills teachers are expected to equip their students with:

“The categories, defined by clear criteria, represent four broad areas of knowledge and skills within which achievement of the curriculum expectations for any given grade is assessed and evaluated. The four categories should be considered as interrelated, reflecting the wholeness and interconnectedness of learning. The categories of knowledge and skills are described as follows: […] Thinking. The use of critical and creative thinking skills and/or processes, as follows:

- planning skills (e.g., focusing research, gathering information, organizing an inquiry)
- processing skills (e.g., analyzing, evaluating, synthesizing)
- critical/creative thinking processes (e.g., inquiry, problem solving, decision making, research) (Ministry of Ed., 2004, p. 2)
Therefore, it is important and necessary that teachers provide opportunities for their students to learn critical thinking skills and practice them.

Smith and Carson (1998), in their book entitled “Educating for a Peaceful Future,” say that peace education takes into account “multiple perspectives and various experiences of violence that affect people’s lives and understands others in their own terms and not just as objects of inquiry” (p. xi, 28). These are elements that lend themselves to critical inquiry. For instance, an expectation of the Grade 6 Science curriculum is that students learn about biodiversity and what happens when it is exploited. Utilizing a Peace Studies framework to learn about deforestation may allow students to think critically about why it happens (“desperate economic circumstance” [structural violence]), the effects it has on the environment (“soil is degraded, habitats gone, the environment depleted” [holistic Gaia peace]), on people (“large tracts of good land are owned by wealthy families and agribusinesses, forcing people to live on marginal land and virgin forests” [feminist peace]), whose rights are being violated by it (“the poor, and the rich when NGO’s and grassroots organization try to stop it” [inner and outer peace]) and why (cosmologies) (Smith & Carson, 1998, p. 25). A Peace Studies framework for learning about deforestation guides students’ toward a reasoned stance by considering issues from all angles and exploring possibilities for improvement.

Another example of how a Peace Studies approach to curriculum lends itself to critical thinking is provided by Dr. James Page (2008):

A key element in critical literacy is understanding and demystifying the codes through which institutions communicate […] military and state institutions communicate in their own code that tends to mystify exactly what is happening with the processes of war and international relations […]. One simple function of peace education is to demystify the language surrounding war. In this sense peace education constitutes a component within the overall task of critical literacy. (p.80)
Through this example Peace Studies is identified as a component of critical literacy, an empowering agent that encourages students to demystify and challenge the status quo/ideas in ways that promote a better existence.

**Summary**

Integrating elements of Peace Studies in the classroom/curriculum is a worthwhile endeavor in theory for teachers as it can lead to the achievement of good classroom management, moral education and critical thinking in an efficient manner. For instance, through a Peace Studies approach to moral education, teachers can help create safe learning environments as students are learning worthwhile ways of behaving – compassion, trust, integrity, care. In this case, moral education can be understood as a classroom management strategy. Overall, a Peace Studies approach to teaching supports student success and gives students the tools necessary to thrive in society.

**Chapter 3: Methodology**

In this chapter I introduce the participants of the research and explain the selection process; the type of research conducted, rationale and limitations; instruments for data collection and a description of the ethical review procedure.

**Procedure**

This study on infusing Peace Studies into the elementary classroom was undertaken by conducting a literature review on Peace Studies/Peace Education. This study also consists of interviews with Peace Studies graduates with experience infusing
Peace Studies in elementary and secondary classrooms. A degree in Peace Studies was an important selection criterion. I find peace becomes an integral part of individuals who study the discipline, and those with a Peace Studies degree are experts in the field.

I chose a qualitative approach to this study because an issue or problem can be explored in greater depth through qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). This study seeks to answer questions related to of the relativeness of Peace Studies in elementary schools and conditions in which Peace Studies might be most effectively infused in the elementary curriculum.

The participants of this study will be referred to with pseudonyms to respect and protect their identity as agreed upon and to promote full participation.

Data collection and analysis

The search for participants

In my search for participants I contacted the alumni of McMaster University and past professors for candidates that fit the criteria for this study. Through the alumni I was connected with Helen, my first participant. I then thought to contact Peace Studies professors and Dr. Anne Pearson from the Department of Religious Studies at McMaster University connected me with Allison, my second participant. For the third participant of this study I contacted the alumni of the University of Waterloo, University of Toronto, and Ottawa University to no avail. I posted advertisements on my LinkedIn page and requested permission to post an advertisement on the University of Toronto graduate LinkedIn page and was still unsuccessful. After consulting with my advisor, I asked the participants if they knew of anyone who met the criteria and who would be interested in
participating in this study. As a result, Helen referred me to Casandra who became the final participant.

Tools used for data collection

The only instrument for data collection was semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted in agreement with the interviewees, based on their preference for either a face-to-face, Skype or email interview. The interview questions (see Appendix B) were designed to allow participants to contribute and/or elaborate on questions based on personal thoughts and experiences with infusing Peace Studies into the classroom. One-on-one interviews were tape recorded and transcribed while email responses to interview questions were saved.

Data analysis

To analyze the data collected from the interviews and to ease the process of compare and contrast, I created a master copy of the interview schedule and after transcribing the interviews I copied and pasted the interviewee responses under the corresponding questions in the master copy. The interviews were then color coded as each interviewee was assigned a color. This also functioned to contextualize the responses as to explain the similarity and differences in experiences and to identify themes within responses. Looking for themes allowed me to see trends in the infusion of Peace Studies in classrooms and teaching strategies. I analyzed the master electronic copy of the interviews looking for responses that do and do not support the literature review under the categories of classroom management, moral education and critical thinking. On a separate Word document I copied and pasted all of the lessons shared by
participants throughout the interview. I looked for emergent themes within the responses and lesson plans provided by the participants to act as the bases for my findings.

Participants

The following criteria were used in the recruitment of participants:

- Peace Studies graduate
- Certified teacher with teaching experience
- Experience infusing peace into the elementary classroom
- Willingness to participate

Here is a brief description of the participants:

Allison participated in a face-to-face interview. She is a new teacher who obtained her Peace Studies degree from McMaster University and participated in various social justice campaigns throughout her undergraduate degree. At McMaster, Allison worked closely with the Ontario Public Interest Research Group, where she received training in consensus and non-violent communication. While obtaining her Bachelor of Education, Allison received TRIBES training. Since graduating, Allison has been working at an outdoor education facility creating and facilitating curriculum. Her elementary school teaching experience comes from her practicum placements in a Grade 3 and 4 split class and a Grade 1 class in Toronto, Ontario.

Helen participated in the study through email correspondence. She has 14 years of experience with Peace Studies and has 9 years combined experience teaching in New Zealand and Colombia, following the American curriculum. She has experience teaching from the primary level to the university level. Helen received her Peace Studies degree
from McMaster University, her MA from the European University Centre for Peace Studies and her PhD from the University of Otago.

Cassandra also participated via email correspondence. She received her MA in Peace Studies from the European University Center for Peace. Casandra’s social experience with Peace Studies is largely based on the people she holds near and dear to her and who work for agencies such as the UN, WFP, Plan International, Every Child, IPPF, and local development charities. As an activist, she works locally to promote education of the marginalized and participates in local and online campaigns to advance the rights of women, immigrants, and the chronically houseless. She has 5 years’ experience working in education. She has completed 4 practicum placements, has experience as a substitute teacher and is currently working in her first teaching contract in Alberta with a junior high class of 10 students with severe emotional and/or behavioral challenges.

**Limitations**

As there were only three participants in the study, it is not possible to generalize from the reason findings. Finally, the limited elementary school teaching experience of the participants also affected their ability to respond to all the interview questions as fully as they would have liked. Allison’s teaching experiences are based on practicums and experience in outdoor education. Helen has 1 years’ experience in the primary grades, 5 years informal experience with the secondary grades a year formal experience at the university level. Her primary experience was with a Grade 5 class in Colombia, following the American curriculum. Most of Helen’s experience is in secondary education and most
her answers reflect her secondary school teaching experiences. Casandra also has a years’ teaching experience within a traditional school setting with students in Grade 6 through 9.

Finally, there is the limitation of the email correspondence interviews. Participants who opted to complete the interview process by email, due to location and time conflicts, received the interview questions via email. As a result, I find some of the responses to lack the richness of those received through a personal interview.

**Ethical Review Procedures**

Participants of this study read and signed the consent form standard for participants of the University of Toronto’s Masters of Teaching Research Paper. Participants were informed that their anonymity would be protected and pseudonyms would be used. Finally, participants were offered the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time with no consequences and were offered the opportunity to review the final product prior to publication.

**Chapter 4: Findings**

This chapter presents the findings of the study. I first discuss the benefits of infusing Peace Studies in the classroom. I do this by focusing on the three aspects of teaching highlighted in the literature review - classroom management, moral education, and critical thinking through the themes of beliefs and values, influences, practices and results. Secondly, I describe the lesson/unit plans of the participants to help address the questions of when, where and how to infuse Peace Studies into the elementary classroom. Lastly, I present the challenges involved in implementing Peace Studies as expressed by the participants. The findings affirm my own experiences infusing Peace Studies as well
as many of the authors of conceptual and practical pieces related to Peace Studies in schools.

*Classroom management*

The first point of research as discussed in the literature review is classroom management. The literature states “there is a direct link between success in school and the school environment in which student learning takes place. Students are more able and more motivated to do well and achieve their full potential in schools that have a positive school climate and in which they feel safe and supported.” (OCT, 2003, p. 3). The interview data seems to support the claim. I asked participants the question, “As a result of infusing Peace Studies in the classroom, do you find the time you spend managing the classroom decreases?” and these are some of the responses I received:

> Yes, it is more efficient if you lay down the class rules, this is how we are going to treat each other and I am not going to tolerate anything else, then if something comes up you can remind students of the ground rules or direct them to anchor charts on how to solve conflict or how we are to treat each other, and I think as a teacher if you are a good mediator and have a compassionate heart and lens you can help model affective facilitation as well. Conflict is inevitable, even in the most dynamic classroom, there is always going to be conflict, but how it is resolved is going to be a lot more peaceful. (Allison, December 2013)

Allison provides insight on how to produce peaceful behaviors through a Peace Studies framework. She explains how formulating ground rules and writing them down on anchor charts provides students with expectations and can facilitate better behavior; if a teacher does not have clear expectations it can become difficult to hold students accountable for their actions.

Cassandra explains it is important to maintain student engagement with assignments or activities that have “value beyond a worksheet.”
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Classroom management is a large component in a behavioral school, but yes, when the students are engaged in learning and are producing something that has value beyond a worksheet that only the teacher sees, they are too busy to be dysregulated (unstructured times are triggers) and you can tell in their faces and their work that they believe in their own value. That leads to them not being pissed off and much less likely to act out. (Cassandra, May 2014)

I witnessed this in one of my own practicum placements. During the time allotted to complete work sheets assigned by the teacher I noticed students throwing erasers at each other, physically wrestling and practicing a lot of unproductive behaviors out of boredom. Because the work had little value to it and was not engaging, the students found ways of using their energy in unproductive ways.

Helen’s response is in line with Allison’s. Helen has 14 years of experience with Peace Studies and says, “I rarely have issues with classroom management, either before or after. My character seems to inspire respectful behavior” (Helen, February 2014). This leads one to believe that when peace is a constant force within the classroom, the focus becomes learning rather than managing misbehavior.

More concrete evidence supporting the literature – that learning occurs in peaceful environments - is found in the responses to the following questions, “As a result of infusing Peace Studies, do you find the students to be more peaceful? Can you give a specific example?” and “Have you faced any obstacles or challenges when incorporating Peace Studies into the curriculum? Attitudes of students? Comprehension?” The participants share responses that illuminate the possibilities. Cassandra said:

There has been marked behavioral improvements in many students and most students are working at grade level […] I took this class over from another teacher who went on a medical leave – he used worksheets for every class and the expectation was that students would simply work on those. I had some challenges having the students understand my approach and building relationships, but when they saw how much time I spent coming up with creative and engaging assignments, and how I model my own exploration, they became comfortable in suggesting ideas and experimenting […] There is one boy who joined our class
shortly before I did. He was in another classroom and was being restrained for physical aggressiveness almost daily. He had no peer connections and was having to leave his house to receive residential treatment as his parents were at a loss of what to do. Now, he is a popular peer, has had no incidents of restraint or timeouts for 7 months, has gotten a summer job, is a recipient of a student award and works very hard in all his endeavors. I have spent a lot of time trying to convince him that he is not a hated monster, but a sensitive person who needs the outlet of creative work to sort out his emotions, and it has paid off. (Cassandra, May, 2014)

In this case, under Casandra’s creative, engaging, and compassionate instruction students began “suggesting ideas and experimenting.” One student went from learning almost nothing due to his aggressive behaviors, and is now working hard, achieving student awards, and has obtained a job.

Helen shares a similar experience where her students expressed a feeling of safety within her classroom, and therefore, students share ideas they normally would not in other classrooms: “Yes. My high school students have told me that my “non-typical” approach to teaching creates a space where they can explore ideas and beliefs that they don’t feel comfortable discussing in other classrooms” (Helen, February 2014). When students feel comfortable enough to share their ideas, it deepens their learning (Government of Canada, 2005).

In the literature review I highlighted the research that found an improvement in grades when a Peace Studies framework for learning is in place; however, the data collected in this study does not suggest an improvement or a decline. All three participants stated:

It is hard to say. I feel as though if you have a compassionate teacher, I think your students will do well, and there will be a lot less conflict in your classroom. Regardless of what their skills are in terms of conflict, when you add Peace Studies to it, you’re adding critical thinking and that’s part of the process. (Allison, December 2013)
We don’t really grade work at our school. I do write comments on all submitted work and I am impressed by how willing students are to be vulnerable (we did a whole lesson on vulnerability to show that it is a strength, not a weakness). They are honest about their work. In class, we have noticed that there is a strong connection amongst students and between students and staff. (Casandra, May 2014).

I haven’t done any quantitative analysis of this. I think marks are subjective and generally useless, so I don’t use them as an indicator. (Helen, February 2014)

It seems as though a study of grades would be required to be able to answer such a question. In fact, Helen suggested the question of grade improvement under the auspice of Peace Studies lends itself to a quantitative study. Allison’s answer seems to be based on theory and this could be due to the limited time she spent in a traditional classroom. She returns to the idea of being a compassionate teacher and infusing Peace Studies in the classroom because it promotes critical thinking. It seems that she believes when compassion and critical thinking skills are present students will be academically successful.

Cassandra and Helen are in situations where grades are not used as an indicator of success thus making it difficult for them to respond to a question about grades. However, the male student described by Casandra, who now receives student awards, could be indicative of an improvement in grades, but this is difficult to determine without knowing what those awards were for.

Another aspect of classroom management discussed in the literature review was cognitive development and positive social behavior. Allison describes how she supported cognitive development with her students while discussing a lesson promoting positive social behavior:

[…]It was accessible, everyone could do it, you could write a much or as little as you wanted, eventually we related it to recess and classroom culture, it sets kids up for lower and higher order thinking, the lower being a discussion on what is
In this scenario students are asked to role-play and think about how they would incorporate peace into the classroom and recess. Through sharing and applying, students are ultimately thinking for themselves and at a deeper level; however, the implications of such an activity are undetermined. Based on theory, one can assume a student’s cognitive ability will improve with such activities, but there is no evidence provided by Allison in this case.

On the other hand, Cassandra’s student who demonstrated marked improvements in behavior could arguably be deemed to have improved cognitively under the auspice of Peace Studies because his thinking became more sophisticated in that he learned how to improve his situation. This student came to the realization that his actions were unproductive and destructive and discovered ways of succeeding within his environment (O’Donnell, 2013). In this case there is no information on what activities specifically helped this student achieve success. All that is known is that Casandra spent great deal of time meeting this student’s psychological, safety, social and esteem needs required for self-actualization and academic improvement (Andrade, 2011).

*Moral education*

In the literature review I argued that Peace Studies is a more practical method of teaching students morality based on the fact that Peace Studies is based on praxis – action informed by theory (Harris & Morrison, 2003). Allison supports this idea when asked the
question, “What do you think your role in character development is?” and explains why theory is not enough when building a child’s character:

Character development is the one document that I cling to as a Peace Studies educator, and in most schools it has been used as sort of a token: hey who gets an award for the most peaceful person of the month, but maybe someone is really struggling in a conflict and they can’t be as patient as everyone else and to award others just doesn’t make sense, and to impose a hierarchy too of who is more patient than another, it is just really backwards. My rule as a teacher who values character development is to model good character practice, and what I mean by that is practicing the basic tenants of peace, treating everybody fairly, recognizing everyone’s gifts, nurturing each individual according to their needs, empowering them to recognize their own gifts and their own capacity, and referring to those character attributes for inspiration in terms of what values are useful for [child] development. But weaving that in everything we do, not just having an announcement of the day or those token things. It’s inherently there to build up the character of the individual. (Allison, December 2013)

Allison describes the power of modelling good behavior and worthwhile ways of being. It is one thing to request students to behave in certain ways, but if the students do not know what patience looks like or sounds like how can they model that worthwhile behavior? Furthermore, students need to be given opportunities to practice worthwhile ways of being because although they may know what it looks like and sounds like it is not until they experience what it feels like that they may fully understand the benefits of acting in worthwhile ways. Lastly, Allison says, “It is inherently [in me] to build up the character of the individual” which reveals intrinsic reward for good behaviors is essential to the process.

Casandra and Helen share similar sentiments in that their role as moral educators is to provide students with opportunities to discover, practice and experience worthwhile ways of being:

I spend more time with my students than any other adult in their lives (especially because many of my students are disconnected from their families); as such, I have a primary place to change the trajectory of their lives and develop their characters to be peaceful, productive, creative, and giving citizens of the world.
Tasking students to go beyond their immediate realities as teenagers requires that they use critical thinking and problem-solving skills. (Casandra, May 2014)

I believe in creating opportunities for students to explore and develop their own character. I create environments/activities that hold up a mirror to students and allow them to reflect on their own values and actions. (Helen, February 2014)

Their beliefs set the stage for students to see worthwhile ways of being through critical thinking and reflection activities, meanwhile providing the space for students to practice those ways for themselves and to experience the rewards. For instance, when asked if the participants noticed a positive change in character in their students after learning through a Peace Studies framework Casandra shared the following:

After discussing what privilege means and what it looks like, students call each other out with that language “stop using your white privilege!” with each other when they present one perspective. Our class is ethnically diverse and our female students are all wrestling with issues of sexuality and self-esteem, and often they correct people’s language (like calling girls “sluts” or “bitches”). (Casandra, May 2014)

Casandra’s students learned about feminist peace through critical thinking and reflection and were practicing it, unprompted and uninterrupted, in real life situations. They were moving away from the harmful implications of language that they used towards improving their own character and that of others.

Helen shares examples of a transformation in character, for the better, in some of her students too:

When I work with teachers to train them in Non-Violent Communication and Conflict Transformation, I often find that the teacher’s greatest learning is about their own personal ways of communicating and the greatest changes are to their behavior (although that may not be the stated goal) […] Another example is using the conflict personalities we discuss in my drama class to “call out” their friends who are being unconstructive when there's a conflict. (Helen, February 2014)

In the above example provided by Helen, students advocate for peaceful interactions between peers, as did Casandra’s students, demonstrating a change in character from
passive dispositions to positive confrontational dispositions. This type of behavior is indeed positive because it supports peace. Most individuals associate passivity with peace, but in my experiences peace is very active and confrontational in that it seeks to confront those who cause harm in order to reverse the effects.

I asked the participants if after teaching through a Peace Studies framework, they noticed their students engaged in extracurricular activities centered on peace. All three participants made similar claims. Allison said:

Not that I know of, the closest to a peace club was at my practicum school that had Eco Club and I did not have the time to attend. (Allison, December 2013)

Allison’s response could be attributed to the short time spent in the classroom – she was unable to assess the effects of her efforts. The fact that there were limited peace initiatives for students to participate in could be another factor. It may be necessary for teachers in elementary schools to consider introducing a variety of peace initiatives as extra-curricular activities to support moral development.

Helen shares only some of her students have participated in peace initiatives:

Some do, but I believe that is because they are already that way inclined (due to parenting or character). But most high school kids just want to talk to their friends and try to get dates. I think the difference will be seen when they’re in university, not immediately. (Helen, February 2014).

Helen believes that those students who did not participate in peace initiatives in high school may get involved later as maturation may be a factor.

Casandra indicates that students talk about engaging in peace initiatives, but have yet to actualize those discussions, “Students have spoken about undertaking campaigns for the Nigerian schoolgirls and climate change but there’s been no tangible action yet” (Casandra, May 2014). Reasons for this could be maturity, available opportunities, or time – perhaps Casandra had yet to support those students in taking action.
I also asked the participants if they experienced their own positive transformation in thought and being after studying peace and violence. Allison replied:

It changed me as an individual. I was really troubled. I had a really difficult life and I was really troubled in my first couple years of university. I couldn’t focus; I found psychology really interesting, but felt disconnected in the classes. I felt like such a passive learner in a field of students that were incredibly competitive. Just a really uncomfortable environment to be in. I also had, as many people do, trauma built from the education system leading up to university. Life just wasn’t fair and then suddenly I come into Peace Studies and I met an awesome group of people, that I am still friends with today, interesting people, people who care about politics, but aren’t interested in debating and arguing, not that kind of politics, but people that are not afraid to talk about love. It changed who I am and it facilitated a sense of empowerment for me and capability, it gave me purpose, it gave me purpose. Suddenly, I realized my sensitive nature and my learning style has a place and value in the school system and not to mention I had professors that were incredibly inspiring and models. (Allison, December 2013)

When Allison could not find a place for her peaceful nature in the world, she either suppressed it or it was suppressed by the culture of violence in which she lives. This was until she discovered Peace Studies; she explained experiencing a transformation in spirit when feeling disconnected from the world to finding a place and purpose within it.

Several times Allison says Peace Studies changed her for the better and that peace is an integral part of who she is. She explicitly states the integrality of peace within her when asked the question “How do you choose when and where you do Peace Studies? E.g., is it planned or does it occur implicitly/subconsciously because of your background?”

It’s a bit of both, consciously and sub-conscientiously […] It’s who I am, you can’t turn off the switch, we are very fortunate that we are equipped with this [Peace Studies] framework, and I think you can agree with me when I say you are changed by it? For instance, going into business you are given a framework for thinking where you aren’t powerful until you’ve put somebody down, made a certain amount of money, whereas Peace Studies, it changes your moral fiber, it changes you on a cellular level, and brightens your light if you want to get really simple about it. When you take that into the world you just resonate that and it changes everything you touch. Peace Studies has equipped me with a framework and I can’t help but apply that framework wherever I go and to whatever I do […] You know what it is? It’s actually like the framework of negative and positive peace, its negative peace all day because ideally there is the absence of
violence, you are not harming [the students], you are encouraging in your words, a good model teacher, the presents of positive peace is woven into the subjects, that’s your conscience efforts. (Allison, December 2013)

Helen also mentions the ability of Peace Studies to influence one’s character:

It depends on what the student already brings to the table. For some it can change their entire world view, for others it will simply give them a more solid grounding to move forward. (Helen, February 2014)

The integrality for Helen appears in her response to the questions, “How do you choose when and where you do Peace Studies? E.g., is it planned or does it occur implicitly/subconsciously because of your background?” Helen’s response to the first question was, “All day, every day,” and her response to the second question was, “a bit of both: When I teach content it’s planned, when I teach skills/behaviors it can be planned or sub-conscious” (Helen, February 2014). For Helen too, peace is a part of everything that she does. Now, one may argue this transformation in character experienced by Allison and Helen is due to an academic career in Peace Studies (a four-year undergraduate degree timeline plus); however, Cassandra demonstrates this is not the case. She does not have an undergraduate degree in Peace Studies; she has an MA in Peace Studies, and shares in the experiences of Allison and Casandra. In response to the question, “How has studying peace impacted your life?” Casandra replied,

Peace Studies has had a huge impact on my life. I’ve learned to be more patient and understanding with others’ needs. It has taught me to see violence as a systematic failure and emboldened me with the desire and courage to overcome this failure (on behalf of myself and all others) with creativity. It has given me a language: I am privileged in more ways than most; I am a feminist; I am pro-choice; I am sensitive to the dynamics of power and poverty; I believe that unmet needs can drive creativity or laziness/violence and it has made me equipped to fight for the former. (Casandra, May 2014)

Casandra’s outlook on life has changed in that now she strives for peace and attempts to reflect peace whenever possible. When asked the question, “How do you choose when
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and where you do Peace Studies? E.g., is it planned or does it occur implicitly/subconsciously because of your background?” Casandra responded:

In classes like Social Studies, we do it in current events discussions and it comes organically out of people’s thoughts. I have done structured lessons on climate change, genocide and gender politics that were supported by PowerPoints. Often, when I am processing with a student over their behavior, life lessons that illuminate making choices that benefit themselves and others come out organically. I often use that as an opportunity to link the caring they show for others in oppressive situations with their own goals. (Casandra, May 2014)

All three participants describe a transformation in thought that resulted from studying peace. In fact, peace has become an integral part of who they are; this is most evident in the explanation of their planned and unplanned efforts at infusing Peace Studies into the classroom. A Peace Studies framework for thinking and doing can be implemented with diverse learners and can have a powerful impact on learning in various contexts. What does vary is “when” and “how” Peace Studies are infused in the curriculum and the degree of change that takes place.

Critical thinking

Critical thinking is an expectation in the Ontario curriculum across subjects and levels. In the literature review I attempted to show the connections between peace education and critical thinking. The responses of participants seem to reflect the literature on this topic. When the participants were asked to define Peace Studies, critical thinking appeared implicitly or explicitly in their definitions:

Peace Studies is educating through and for peace. Simply put, using peaceful practices to disseminate information, so facilitating dialogs, discussions, peace research which for me takes on a feminist perspective, and it’s for peace, there is a purpose behind it, and some people may argue that it is not objective enough, well everything is subjective and I like that that is acknowledged, and there is a lot of collaboration involved and relating to shared experiences, finding common themes. (Allison, December 2013)
Allison says Peace Studies is “using peaceful practices to disseminate information, so facilitating dialogs, discussions, peace research […] relating to shared experiences, common themes,” and that critical thinking happens when students are given the opportunity to discuss topics and conduct their own research.

Like Allison, Helen does not directly address the connection between Peace Studies and critical thinking. She says, “Medicine is the study of the body and how to cure it. Peace Studies is the same but for the world. As you can specialize on parts of the body, you can also specialize in particular concepts/parts of peace” (Helen, February 2014). Peace Studies supports critical thinking in that it is dependent on it.

Cassandra (2014) is more explicit in her response:

To me, Peace Studies are a way of opening space to problem-solve the depravities of life, with solutions that benefit all parties. It is dialogue, critical analysis, exploration of needs and emotions, and an understanding of life as a grand gift that faces challenges with grace and commitment to our collective experience. It is about social justice (going outside of ourselves to help others in their struggles); it is about personal betterment (facing our own challenges with courage and an approach that benefits others); it is about imagining life as peaceful, fulfilling, and wildly creative.

The significance of critical thinking as a component of their definition of Peace Studies is that if you are infusing Peace Studies into the curriculum you are simultaneously infusing opportunities for critical thinking as the discipline requires and facilitates it.

Other areas in which critical thinking appears as an integral component of Peace Studies are found in the responses of the participants to the following two questions:

What do you believe students can gain from Peace Studies?

They can gain a strong sense of themselves and their capabilities, I find Peace Studies to be the most empowering discipline, because the knowledge equips you with an analysis into world problems or interpersonal problems and gives you the tools that you need and resources to address some of life’s hardest challenges […]. (Allison, December 2013)
A deep understanding of who they are, in relation to the world. An ability to critically analyze both their privileges and challenges. Tools to self-reflect, accept accountability, and act for the betterment of all. (Casandra, May 2014)

A more open mind and critical thinking skills. (Helen, February 2014)

Do you believe Peace Studies can improve student’s critical thinking abilities? If so, why?

Yes, because it requires holistic thinking. Students are invited to consider a topic from multiple angles - different philosophies, lenses, language, concepts, etc. They are also invited to consider all stakeholders - another layered approach. “The goal then requires a process of critical thinking that is dynamic, balanced, and constructive.” (Allison, December 2013)

Absolutely! I love bringing in stories that get kids outraged by the headline, and then use exploratory questioning to see it from different perspectives or ask what would be different if it happened to their own family. For example, there was a recent local case of police officers using fatal force to stop a man driving erratically in a stolen vehicle. As many of our students distrust authority or have had experiences with the law, they immediately spoke about outrageous police practices. While we talked about those too (especially famous cases like Rodney King), facts were uncovered to understand why the police may have done what they did. We are also doing a climate change unit in Science that requires students to examine their own practices, like wasting water or buying electronics. (Casandra, May 2014)

Yes. When I teach Social Studies I present multiple viewpoints from multiple sources and encourage students to discuss the concept of truth. They debate the validity of sources and what makes one source more believable than another. They also analyze their own prejudices and belief systems. (Helen, February 2014)

The reoccurrence of critical thinking within responses to various questions further demonstrates the interconnectedness of critical thinking and Peace Studies. Allison explains thinking from multiple perspectives (holistic thinking) is part of the approach to learning within a Peace Studies framework. Cassandra supports this idea when she has students come to a holistic understanding of current events by asking them to consider events from multiple angles. Helen explains that while teaching Social Science she not
only asks students to approach the material from different perspectives, but presents multiple viewpoints rather than just what is in the text book. Helen models critical thinking so that her students understand what it looks like and she demonstrates what it sounds like by discussing the various perspectives as well as asking students to discuss the concept of truth by debating the validity of sources.

In the literature review I argued that a Peace Studies approach to curriculum aids in critical thinking and in turn character development and classroom management. Evidence of the interconnectedness of these concepts is found within the following response from Allison:

Yes. People, students, like peace. They can relate to it. We all can. When a student likes something, they become engaged and empowered. In this place, they are focused and can use all their faculties. They are safe, and they are calm. This fosters a much deeper approach to learning and critical thinking. I'll give you an example from the field. I work as an educator in nature connection and see this all of the time. "Problem child" comes in, hitting trees with sticks, running around, etc. So, the kid gets paired off with a leader, but the teacher is always there to support the facilitator and the student. On one occasion, this 'difficult' boy found a cocoon of a butterfly woven between three sticks. He stopped and stared. The whole world melted away. After about 10 minutes, it was time to come back to the greater group. Now the child was much calmer and focused, but he couldn't stop asking questions - what is it? What will it turn into? How big will it be? And most importantly... how can I help? (Allison, December 2013)

The young boy demonstrated critical thinking in his curiosity and discovery of the butterfly and cocoon. He became calm when allowed to feed his curiosity which in turn led to further inquiry. Finally, this resulted in less time spent by the teacher managing misbehavior.
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A focus on lessons

Participants were asked to provide examples of lessons they have facilitated in the classroom. The purpose of this was 1) to provide resources for teachers interested in infusing Peace Studies in the classroom.

Allison shared multiple activities/lessons that she conducted during her time practicing teaching, most of which are narrative based. Allison explains,

Narratives are so powerful, we respond to them in different ways, and they just have the ability to inspire and engage, and they are what builds culture, so if we want a culture of peace, literature is a part of everything, having a good resource list is important […] I take what I have learned [about peace and violence] and translate [it] into their understanding and that is why a lot of my peace education is narrative based. (Allison, December 2013)

Allison uses literature as a tool to make complex concepts accessible for younger learners. She provides a specific example of this through the explanation of a unit she conducted centered on a book entitled *The Good Garden* (2010):

We did a whole unit on *The Good Garden*. It was cool because every day we did one chapter, it’s [a book] about how one family went from being hungry to having enough. It takes you through these beautiful illustrations. The family was told you need to sell your farm because you are not making enough, it talks about biodiversity and composting, it talks about economic injustice and then they find a way for the community to invest in their garden. So what we did with that, we incorporated an art piece into it, where they each drew aspects of a garden with their family, and then we cut it up into pieces and made a huge mural on the wall, it was really cool. And with this you can incorporate technology because you can actually email the girl that this story is based on. You can ask her questions, discuss the content and this way they can really engage with the content. (Allison, December 2013)

To teach about difficult concepts such as structural violence, economic injustice, and poverty, Allison uses an age-appropriate story to help students understand. Even topics such as biodiversity and sustenance can be difficult subject matter for students to comprehend and teaching those concepts through narratives can help. Furthermore, this unit covers both Peace Studies content and curriculum. It has students engage with issues
of structural violence through issues of poverty that relate to the source of our food in Canada, making the material relevant and in turn meaningful; as mentioned before, studies have shown relevance and purpose is key to learning (Bar-Tal, 2002). Students also learn about Gaia Peace (environmental peace) through biodiversity and composting and social and economic justice through farming and cooperation. The unit is cross-curricular as it deals with science through biodiversity, language arts through literature and art through drawing and mural making. It also supports the achievement of teaching goals in that it incorporates technology which is key to academic and social success especially in the digital age (Huneycutt, 2013). It supports literacy through reading and discussion; moral education in teaching social justice, and co-operation through working proactively to complete a project with peers and family which functions to support better learning experiences because it creates an environment where students can feel “supported and secure” (Cushman, 2013, p. 934).

Allison shares another science lesson that functions similarly to The Good Garden unit and incorporates narratives:

[I] did a council of beings, for science. For example they would take on an animal, in art they make a mask, in writing they write a small paragraph about their animal, and then we all came together in a circle on the last day of school and introduced our characters. I had written a story that incorporated their characters so when I read their part of the story they came out, for physical education, and moved like they’re animal. (Allison, December 2013)

This time Allison compiled their work and created a story for the children. Once again she made a personal connection between the students and the material. She also designed the lesson so that it was cross-curricular, being efficient in meeting curriculum expectations and Peace Studies objectives.
Allison also shared a book that she reads with the primary grades whenever possible:


Through this story students learn how to identify and describe peace in relevant ways.

For Peace Studies, this is especially important because as explained in the literature review, few people really know how to describe peace. When Allison asks students what they think peace smells like, she is not asking students to repeat what they have read (lower order thinking questions), she is asking them to think for themselves, make connections, evaluate and analyze the text so that they can produce their own ideas; asking such questions supports critical thinking skill building and cognitive development (Stagg-Peterson, lecture, 2013). She does the same in an activity she calls “What would you do?”

What was really cool was in a Grade 1 class we would play, “What would you do?” from different fairy tales. Looking at the three little pigs from different perspectives, the pigs’ perspectives the wolf’s perspective, I used point of view as an opportunity to introduce concepts of conflict – to have a point of view we listen closely, we listen to what the person has to say. It’s really the basics of conflict work and that worked. So, then we created an anchor chart where we put it on the wall, how to resolve conflict peacefully, and the students could refer to that if anyone [finds themselves] in conflict. (Allison, December 2013)

Again, Allison makes a personal connection between content and the students when she relates the activity to solving conflict between peers. By doing this she is asking students to think critically and on deeper levels.

Allison stresses the importance of teaching to the stage of development of the students and she explains how she navigates through this challenge in her explanation of Peace Education and Peace Studies:
I perceive Peace Studies as Peace Education that manifests in different ways for different ages. For the younger years, it's about embracing the virtues of peace, positive peace, while also exploring conflict. As kids get older, there can be an integration of negative peace - with a focus on physical, structural and cultural violence. Later, discussions about peace research, feminism and politics can surface. Peace Education/Peace Studies carries with it unique content, but the approach, the pedagogical style is also unique with a focus on dialogue, collaboration and critical thinking. (Allison, December 2013)

Allison has discovered a general map of child development in relation to Peace Studies concepts that is the basis for her teaching practices for specific grades. Allison also adds that the relationship teachers have with their students is key to deciding what is appropriate:

If you don’t have rapport with your kids it can actually do a lot of harm. If they don’t want anything to do with you and you are teaching them social justice they are not going to be interested in social justice, but if you have a really cool working relationship with them and they believe in you and they believe in what you are teaching then you have an obligation to teach this stuff. (Allison, December 2013)

Thus, when infusing Peace Studies into the classroom, Allison finds it is important to know the students and establish rapport to ensure that students are ready to engage in activities appropriate for their development.

It is difficult to determine how effective the activities shared by Allison are because my study did not involve any classroom observation or input from her students. However, comments made by Allison about her lessons, “that was really cool,” and “that went pretty well,” and the fact that she chose to share these ideas, suggests that they were successful and enjoyed by her students.

Casandra shared a detailed lesson plan that you can find in Appendix C. Reading through the lesson plan it becomes apparent that reflection and discussion is one mode of disseminating information about peace while addressing curriculum and teaching goals. Casandra teaches about the concept of identity through discussion and how identity can
be peaceful or violent. She has students reflect on what they are learning and respond only through action (crumpling the paper). This lesson is followed by a group discussion to ensure students fully understand the significance of what they have learned.

   Casandra states “the teacher/facilitator is to participate” and that this lesson is “emotive” and should only be done with seriousness. I believe that the teacher is required to participate because if the teacher is not participating then it begs of the students, “Why should they?” The lesson would be less effective without the participation of the teacher.

   Like Allison’s lessons, I find Casandra’s to be cross-curricular as well in that students are writing (Language Arts), and practicing mental math (ranking). Through this lesson, students are engaged in critical thinking as they have to decide which identity will be best suited to them and why those traits were assigned to them by others or themselves. By asking students to write down their best identifiers, students are learning about worthwhile ways of being, contributing to moral education and classroom management. By asking students to consider their own identities Casandra makes the concept relatable to students and meaningful, which is essential to learning (Andrade, 2011).

   When asked how she prefers to teach Peace Studies, Casandra replied “Mostly through dialogue” (Casandra, May 2014). She adds,

   We also do project-based learning (open-ended presentations where students research a topic, look at various perspectives, share their own thoughts, and propose solutions). We look at things like: the impact of humans on the environment; issues in the legal system (I used to work in a halfway house); racism; feminism and gender equality. Through dialogue and projects where students can ask questions, propose solutions, and reflect on their own involvement. Poetry is my game, and it is a great way to explore uncomfortable subjects in a simultaneously detached and deeply embedded way. (Casandra, May 2013)
In combination with dialogue, Casandra employs project-based learning to provide her students with an enriched experience. The emotions that she seeks to draw from her students functions to aid in the moral education and classroom management process as often students are desensitized to vulnerable emotions due to the media (read “The greatest danger: Apathia, the deadening of mind and heart” by J.R. Macy). By bringing empathy into the classroom, students can better relate to one another and thus have positive relationships (Tavangar, 2014).

As in Allison’s case, there is no evidence of the effectiveness of this lesson; however, it seems that Casandra has facilitated this lesson more than once as she gives specific instruction on how the lesson should be carried out in order for it to be effective – it seems that she understands where it may have needed improvements and adjusted it accordingly. The characteristics of the lesson (relevance, minds on, action and debrief, cross-curricular), suggests that the lesson should be successful (Hunt, Wiseman & Touzel, 2009).

Helen provided an outline of what she teaches (see Appendix D). She finds a place for peace education through established subjects such as History, Social Studies and Religious Studies. She makes content relevant for students by choosing subject matter that affects them directly or indirectly in various ways. She tackles issues of moral education and classroom management through the education of skills and behaviors. Helen explains that she “tends to follow Bar-Tal’s (2002) Peace Pedagogy principles,” and says, “they are inherently obvious to me and are confirmed by best practice research in meta-analyses of teaching.” Helen shared the article she referred to. While reading the article, I noticed similarities between Bar-Tal’s research and the lessons conducted by all of the participants. Bar-Tal (2002) states:
History, geography, the social sciences, literature, and languages are the most salient examples of subjects that should include suitable themes for peace education (e.g., the causes of war, its costs, and the causes of discrimination, peacemaking, different types of peace, the meaning of justice, and the importance of equality). Teaching these subjects, using peace education orientations, and keeping its objectives in mind are the best way to implement peace education in schools. (p. 31)

We see this in Allison’s approach too when she facilitates units and lessons that are cross-curricular and incorporate narratives.

Bar-Tal (2002) also states that peace education has to be relevant in that it deals with current concerns and social issues of the society in which students live (p. 32). He argues that this will show students that they are dealing with real issues, giving purpose to the subject matter, creating engagement, which leads to success (success being a change in behaviors and thinking towards a peaceful reality) (Bar-Tal, 2002). The topic of relevance was discussed in detail for Allison’s lessons, but briefly touched on by Casandra and Helen. To delve deeper in, the topic of identity as explored by Cassandra is something most children struggle with from an early age and that is cultivated at a young age. It is relevant to students because their identities are fluid as they grow and live experiences at home, school and in the community. Adolescence can be a difficult time for students as they are trying to discover who they are amongst peer pressure, stereotypes, and teacher and parent expectations. The topics which Helen covers: history of no-violent revolutions, actions of no-violent leaders, women’s history, suffragettes, current status of women, world religions is relevant to students in that non-violent revolutions and leaders have helped to shape the world in which we live today. The female race cannot be avoided and their contributions to society have also functioned to shape the world. As Canada is a multicultural nation it is useful for students to learn about the different religions that guide many peoples thoughts and actions. Through her
curricular choices, Helen encourages open-mindedness, critical thinking (multiple viewpoints on controversial topics), empathy, responsibility, self-reliance, care for others, team work, respect and acceptance among her students so they can be academically and socially successful.

Tools for Teaching: Summary

Allison takes a literary approach to teaching, while Casandra prefers dialogue. Helen has provided more of an outline of what she teaches which can be done either through dialogue, narratives, both or by other means. Dialogue and narratives can be considered useful tools for teaching peace and curriculum – they are generally engaging, lend them-selves to making connections, thinking critically while promoting literacy, and can be incorporated into most subjects. It is interesting to note that all three participants provided lessons/outlines that incorporate personal connections, that elicit emotions, and that incorporate topics relevant to students’ lives. The lessons/outline provided can be connected to multiple curricular expectations. Lastly, the lessons shared by the participants can be adapted for use with different grade levels. Not to mention, narratives (stories) and dialogue (ways of talking about narratives, topics) are tools already used by teachers and students for learning, generally the “know how” is there, it is only a matter of choosing narratives and dialogue that simultaneously address curriculum and promote peace.
Challenges to Peace Studies

Although, thus far, it seems that a Peace Studies framework is ideal for meeting some of the goals of the education of children, the participants did describe some challenges they face.

Peace studies as a discipline has been challenged. As Kurlansky explains:

Peace has been marginalized because it is a truly revolutionary idea, an idea that seeks to completely change the nature of society, a threat to the established order. And it has always been treated as something profoundly dangerous. (Kurlansky, 2006, p.5)

Allison comments on this controversy:

I’ll start with this, when I was in teachers college I was really ra ra about social and environmental justice. I facilitated workshops in consensus and nonviolent communication and some of my peers were really into it and some of them saw me as a “brown noser,” that’s what it’s called right? So that was difficult and I felt there was a lot of backlash. (Allison, December 2013)

Allison’s comments resonated with me as I have observed and experienced labels such a “tree hugger,” or “hippy.” Allison experienced similar attitudes from her peers for doing something “out of the ordinary.” Doing something positive equated to being the “teacher’s pet.” For those not adequately educated in peace, these negative attitudes can function to deter individuals from acting in peaceful ways and thus, function to reinforce a culture of violence. We see this with bullying all of the time. Considering the latest trends in fashion, many students want Nikes or Adidas shoes because they are what is “in.” To not have name brand shoes leaves one susceptible to bullying, and parents are implicitly forced to spend the money on such products for the sake of their children. The same goes for peace. In this case, Allison experiences negative attitudes to peace that function to marginalize it.

Allison shares another similar experience that took place in the staff room:
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I reference teachers college a lot because I feel like that was a mini place where I could practice my interests and there was a lot of resistance to the ideas I was bringing to class, but I remember also being in the staff room and I wanted to facilitate a discussion about Peace Studies in the classroom amongst teachers, how you practice peace in the classroom, and I remember putting up a schedule asking what would be a good day for you and I passed it around and the teachers just weren’t having it and I had this sick feeling that I had overstepped my place, like who am I to show up and suddenly think I could try to facilitate a discussion on a topic that they’re not interested in or that they are already incorporating into their school, they don’t need someone to pioneer Peace Studies in their school. So that was a little bit uncomfortable for me. (Allison, December 2013)

There seems to be resistance to the idea of talking about peace in this situation, so much so Allison felt embarrassed for even bringing up the subject.

Helen shares similar experiences with negativity with her practice: “Some colleagues are supportive, others hate what I do and think I make them look bad.” Helen also alludes to the controversy in her response to the question, “How often do you do Peace Studies with your students?”:

[… ] sometimes I need to disguise it [infusing Peace Studies] due to curriculum requirements. E.g. I do a drama unit that’s about conflict resolution and conflict styles but we discuss it in terms of plot and character development.

There is a suggestion here that too much peace education is unacceptable in schools.

On the other hand, the participants explain that doing Peace Studies is sometimes appreciated:

When I integrated Peace Studies into my practicum it was incredibly well received, the teacher loved it, but you have to tread very carefully because you don’t want to be that peace nick or that environmental activist because for some teachers and parents it may not work very well, but if you find a way to connect it to curriculum…My teacher asked me for my lesson plans because the school was going platinum with their eco club and one of the requirements was to have green initiatives in their classroom so she asked me for my lesson plans, that was a source of pride that the teacher took them to the principle and said, “Hey look at what we are doing.” […] In both of my summative evaluations, they [Associate Teacher] wrote in there that she is a passionate individual who promotes social and environmental justice, and these days that is valuable. That is something that they recognized in me that stood out. I think that they are honest enough that if
something wasn’t clicking or working they would have told me. (Allison, December 2013)

Colleagues and administrators have been very supportive, and I’ve had no concerns from parents. I’ve had positive encouragement from colleagues and students have reported that they like my personality [...] Parents have been appreciative in conversations and other teachers have said that I’m “doing something right” (Casandra, May 2014)

No (negative feedback from parents or staff), because I don’t "teach" anything. I just pose questions and give multiple perspectives - then allow students to explore and make their own decisions. (Helen, February 2014)

All three participants experienced some degree of support for their teaching style and encouragement. In addition, there was an absence of direct negative feedback from parents and staff. However, this may be because Peace Studies 1) coincides with the schools mission, specifically in Casandra’s case where she works in a school with a high number of students with behavior issues where peaceful behaviors are welcomed or 2) Peace Studies was infused into the curriculum in a subtle way. As Allison and Helen state, “you must tread carefully,” and “I never introduce it (Peace Studies) as such.” The theme that, “too much peace is no good” surfaces in these responses, leading the participants to disguise their teaching or infusion of Peace Studies’ from time to time. Furthermore, Helen stated that she does not actually “teach” anything. This comment seems to connect to the perception that Peace Studies allows teachers to stand on a personal soapbox and teach values and ideas that might not be shared by the community. Helen tries to avoid this critique by stating that she does “not actually teach anything related to Peace Studies explicitly.” She says she simply presents content and concepts and has the students come to their own conclusions.
Another challenge experienced by Allison was the application of peace related concepts by students. In relation to the point of view lesson she conducted, Allison explained:

The conflict part was a little bit difficult, but not in their own comprehension, I think they got the concept, but I don’t know how well they would apply it, I don’t know how many of them would resolve conflict using those steps. (Allison, December 2013)

The difficulty students experience with apply concepts could be attributed to the age of the students as Allison carried out this lesson with a Grade 3 class. The results may have been different with older students further along in their journey of cognitive development.

Cassandra and Helen both had difficulties getting their students to move beyond worksheets and memorization:

I took this class over from another teacher who went on a medical leave – he used worksheets for every class and the expectation was that students would simply work on those. I had some challenges having the students understand my approach and building relationships, but when they saw how much time I spent coming up with creative and engaging assignments, and how I model my own exploration, they became comfortable in suggesting ideas and experimenting. (Casandra, May 2014)

Students are often resistant at first because they prefer to be in classrooms where answers are given to them and they can just memorize. It is a struggle to convince them that they have the answers and they need to think for themselves. (Helen, February 2014)

Attempting to move students from worksheets and memorization to thinking and doing on their own can be a challenge for a framework that requires this. Patients and opportunity seem key to addressing these issues.
Chapter 5: Discussion

In this chapter I provide a summary of the Peace Studies framework and underline why a Peace Studies approach to teaching is worthwhile by focusing on the benefits of the practice. I consider the challenges of infusing Peace Studies in the classroom based on the entirety of the study. I make recommendations for future studies and lastly, I close this chapter with my final thoughts.

What is a Peace Studies framework?

At OISE, teacher candidates are taught the best way for students to internalize material is by demonstrating what it “looks like” and “sounds like.” Based on my findings, teaching within a Peace Studies framework looks like this:

- Teaching for peace means taking advantage of teachable moments such as conflicts that arise in the classroom, student inquiry in the form of general questions that arise from lessons, and through current events
- Planned lessons to teach about peace
- Infusing the teaching of peace across curriculum
- Teacher and students working together
- Teacher as facilitator rather than taking part of the “sage on the stage”
- Doing praxis by blending theory and practice
- Engaging students in real, meaningful and relevant activities
- Teacher modelling worthwhile behaviors
- Group discussions that reflect respect
- Compassionate teaching
Teaching within a Peace Studies framework sounds like this:

- Laughing
- Clapping/cheers
- Rhyme or rhythm
- Silence/listening
- Speaking in turn/ different voices
- Organized chaos
- Words of encouragement/positive reinforcement from teacher and students

A Peace Studies approach to teaching can be summarized as creative, participatory, reflective, compassionate, supportive, diversified and challenging pedagogy.

**Why take a Peace Studies approach to teaching?**

In the literature review I focused on three aspects of teaching to discuss why a Peace Studies framework is significant. These include classroom management, moral education and critical thinking. The participants of this study have shared instances where Peace Studies has resulted in improvement in these areas. To reiterate, Cassandra discussed a remarkable positive change in behavior in several of her students that functioned to alleviate the time she spent classroom managing. She shared several examples of students moving towards more worthwhile behaviors and away from those with undesirable effects. Similarly, Allison shared the story of a boy and his experience after discovering the cocoon. She also mentioned her students’ ability to think critically when engaged in meaningful activities. Casandra’s students demonstrated the ability to think critically when they began to challenge sexist attitudes. Helen noticed that after some time her students began to ask far more questions.
Challenges in operationalizing Peace Studies in elementary classrooms

The participants mentioned three main challenges. Although moral education and classroom management are interrelated aspects of teaching, a culture of violence exists in many schools making moral education challenging. Even though teachers may model and educate about worthwhile ways of being within a Peace Studies framework, strong and sometimes seductive and destructive images and models in the media and the world beyond the classroom dampen their efforts.

Another challenge arises when students become so inspired by peace that they begin to put others down, unintentionally, for not complying with the basic tenants of peace. I am guilty of this myself and, in an aside, Allison expressed going through this “phase” as well. I will call this phase the “holier than thou” phase. For instance, in the beginning of my Peace Studies career, I became outraged by the historical and contemporary atrocities of Catholicism, to the point that I disrespected those who follow the faith by refusing to sit, stand and kneel while at church attending my nephew’s first communion ceremony. I thought I was doing “good” by resisting the hierarchy of the church that has served historically and even contemporarily to do harm. Then later in my career I realized my actions were disrespectful and did not comply with my beliefs (peace). I realized there are better ways of addressing my anger and frustration that do support peace.

Another example of this “holier than thou” phase is a result of peace through health in relation to smoking. As most people understand smoking as bad for your health, it is not uncommon to witness students translate this into “you are bad if you smoke.” In fact during my teaching practicum, the students presented their rants through choral reading and some students stated they were good kids because they did not smoke.
This caught me off guard because people who smoke are not bad people; however, this fact is being glossed over and students’ understanding of the advertising against smoking is that those who smoke are bad. Until students learn how to think critically about their actions and thoughts, and not just those of others, the “holier than thou” attitude is subject to arise and must be challenged.

Regrettably, I did not ask my participants about their perceptions of the question of whether or not curriculum is a possible barrier to Peace Studies. I have reflected on my own experiences during the practicum which I felt that the curriculum did not always allow for the explicit infusion of Peace Studies. For instance, because Peace Studies does not have a specific allotment in the curriculum, the study of issues such as war or feminist peace are difficult to explore unless they fit, somehow, into the expectations for students in a particular grade level. For instance, my colleagues and I were discussing how to teach students about gender biases when there are no courses such as Women Studies at the elementary level to provide the space for those discussions. Essentially, a teacher would have to find a place for that discussion within the current curriculum or leave it out because going outside of the curriculum runs the risk of parent scrutiny and teacher liability. It would therefore be worthwhile exploring how to create space for Peace Studies in the curriculum; however, teaching Peace Studies as a “stand alone” subject could result in Peace Studies being “skipped” in lieu of subjects that some teachers and parents might consider “more important” such as math and language arts. This happens all of the time with subjects such as art and music which do have an official place in the Ontario elementary curriculum. The current curriculum from which Peace Studies in absent, acts as a barrier to exploring all that Peace Studies encompasses. However, the addition of Peace Studies to the curriculum could further marginalize this
important discipline because of the perception that it is not a core subject and that it can be overlooked in favor of more important subjects.

**Recommendations for future studies**

Because grades are so heavily relied upon to determine student success in Ontario, it would seem that quantitative studies of student achievement in schools and classrooms where a Peace Studies framework exists are required. Such studies could add to the very few studies that explore the impact of Peace Studies on student learning and achievement. I would hope quantitative analysis, with positive results, would convince the Canadian Government to fulfill its 1948 promise that “committed signatories to organize education that will promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, [that] shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace” (Osborne, 1988, p.13). Although many peace initiatives already exist in Ontario schools, and Catholic education is doing its’ best to fulfill the 1984 promise indirectly through the teachings of Christ, much more needs to be done as too many Canadians believe “too much peace” is not good in a country that prides itself on peace.

Furthermore, I find the practices and strategies of the teachers in this study are similar to and overlap with progressive pedagogies in the works, such as that of Jack Miller and his work on the holistic curriculum and transformative strategies for the classroom. Perhaps it is not so much a question of how teachers teach, but how often they are practicing such teaching styles. Or it could be a matter of what content is being taught. Studies in this area could provide further insight into what exactly promotes academic and social success in the classroom.
Conclusion

I find the participants of this study to be equipped with a framework that supports key goals of the teaching profession and Peace Studies. I find a Peace Studies framework not to be limited to those who hold a Peace Studies degree; for those who do, the framework is innately there, and a constant force, but the framework and lessons are accessible, achievable and adaptable to most classrooms and those within them. Remember, peace became integral for Casandra after two years of study. If teachers and students are practicing peace on a regular basis together, peace can be an integral part of all individuals. This is to stress the point that peace is not an “esoteric subject reserved for the knowledgeable few” (Gut, July 2014), it is a subject and framework for thinking achievable by all; I have witnessed this in my eldest son, who is only eight years of age, privileged by my own education.

What is important, and that might be an area of struggle for teachers is integrating Peace Studies in the hidden and unhidden curriculum. The responses of the participants to various questions aid in the understanding of Peace Studies as a formal and informal subject – formal through planned lessons and informal through organic actions and discussions. To experience the same affects as the participants, one must attempt to infuse it into everything one does. Bar-Tall (2002) agrees when he says, “it must be incorporated into the objectives and curricula of other subjects and be interwoven into their instruction” (p. 31). Research has demonstrated that children need consistency and that without it they can become dysregualted. The University of Alabama, Child Developments Resources (2014) finds, “consistency makes the child’s world predictable and less confusing. It frees their minds of worry about what might happen and teaches
them accountability for their actions” (para. 1). This may be why after time spent in the participants’ classroom where peace is constant students have demonstrated more peaceful behaviors. Therefore, the place for Peace Studies within elementary schools is in everything students and teachers do.

An obstacle for teachers is the human conditioning to violence, and having to constantly struggle with that conditioning to teach otherwise. Individuals do not have to be perfect in terms of never causing harm to be proficient peace educators, that would be impossible – “to err is human,” what one must possess in order to do Peace Studies “all day, every day” is an awareness for harm and when harm is being conducted in order to address those actions and highlight them in ways that promote peace. One must be willing to infuse Peace Studies into the curriculum; if one is forced against one’s will the affects could be harmful to students (the teacher could carry negative resistance to the task into the classroom). One must overcome the fear of peace, because it is essentially the ultimate goal of society. Without the acceptance of this goal, infusing Peace Studies into the curriculum will be a difficult challenge.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interview

Date: ___________________

Dear ____________________,

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate. I am studying the integration of Peace Studies into the Ontario elementary and high school curriculum for the purposes of investigating an educational topic as a major assignment for our program. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

I am writing a report on this study as a requirement of the Master of Teaching Program. My course instructor who is providing support for the process this year is Dr. Gagné. The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research. My data collection consists of an approximate 40 minute interview that will be tape-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to you. I can conduct the interview at your office or workplace, in a public place, or anywhere else that you might prefer.

The contents of this interview will be used for my assignment, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a conference or publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the tape recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

Please sign the attached form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher name: Rita Reis

Instructor’s Name: Dr. Antoinette Gagné
Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Rita Reis and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described.

Signature: ______________________________

Name (printed): __________________________

Date: __________________________
Appendix B: Interview Questions

Background Information
1. Are you currently teaching? Please provide general details.
2. How many years of experience do you have in the teaching profession?
3. What grades and subjects have you taught?
4. Where did you receive your Peace Studies degree?
5. What is the extent of your experience with Peace Studies? Academic, social, activism, training

Beliefs/Values
1. How do you define Peace Studies?
2. How has being a student of Peace Studies impacted your life? E.g. the ways in which you think and behave? Your beliefs?
3. What do you believe students can gain from Peace Studies?
4. As a teacher and peace studies graduate, what do you believe is your role in character development? Why?
5. Do you believe taking a Peace Studies approach to teaching can aid in the character development process? If so, how? Examples?
6. Do you believe taking a Peace Studies approach to teaching creates a safe learning environment in the classroom? If so, why? Examples?
7. Do you believe Peace Studies can improve student’s critical thinking abilities? If so, why? Examples?

Influencing Factors to Taking a Peace Studies Approach to Teaching
1. Why do you choose to take a Peace Studies approach to teaching?
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2. What do you hope students will carry with them when they leave your class?

3. Have you faced any obstacles or challenges when incorporating Peace Studies in the curriculum? E.g. attitudes of students/parents/colleagues? Student comprehension?

4. What kind of feedback (negative, positive) have you had from students, parents, colleagues or other community members regarding your practice of infusing Peace Studies into the classroom?

5. Have parents or teachers expressed an improvement in their children’s/students’ behavior or academics since being in your classroom?

6. Do students generally express appreciation, excitement, or disinterest when “doing” peace studies?

7. How has feedback influenced how and what you teach?

“Doing” Peace Studies

1. How do you introduce peace concepts to your students and what concepts do you teach?

2. How do you choose when and where you do Peace Studies? E.g. is it planned or does it occur implicitly?

3. How often do you do Peace Studies with your students? All day? Most of the day? Some of the day? Only in certain subjects? Why?

Teacher Practices

1. How do you prefer to infuse Peace Studies into the classroom? Why?

2. Can you give me an example or multiple examples of lessons you've taught that incorporated Peace Studies and that you found to be successful?

3. Can you tell me about one or two resources that you have used to incorporate Peace Studies into your classroom instruction?
4. Can you tell me about time/times when you had your students actively engage in peace projects (praxis)?

**Results**

1. As a result of the infusion of Peace Studies, do you find your students to be more peaceful by the end of the year then when they started? Can you give a specific example?
2. As a result of the infusion of Peace Studies, do you find that the grades of your students improve by the end of the year? Example?
3. As a result of the infusion of Peace Studies, do you find the time you spend doing classroom management decreases? Example?
4. As a result of the infusion of Peace Studies do you see an improvement in your student’s critical thinking skills? Example?
5. As a result of the infusion of Peace Studies, do you find your students engaging in extracurricular activities centered on peace? Example?
6. Have you ever witnessed your students using a Peace Studies perspective when they are not prompted? Example?
Appendix C: Identity Lesson

Overview

This exercise aims to get students thinking about how identifiers link to self-concept and how identity is both core to a person and a choice of cultivation.

Activities

Students will sit in a large circle, with only a pen and 5 slips of paper at their disposal (no phones, backpacks, etc.). Teacher/facilitator is to participate in all activities as well.

• Introduce concept of identity, how it is used to self-define and how others might define a person. Outline how identifiers can be physical (e.g. “tall”) or value-driven (e.g. “helpful”) or vocational (e.g. “poet”, “caregiver”, “athlete”) – they can be what a person looks like, does, who they love, etc. It is helpful to provide examples and ask students to come up with identifiers in the large group.
• Ask students to write an identifier on each slip of paper. These should be things about themselves they think are the most important identifiers they wish to be known for. Once done, have them rank them in order of importance (with least on top).
• One by one, go through the first 4 slips of paper until the last one remains. After each prompt, each student will crumple the slip up and toss it in the middle of the circle. Lead this process by giving the following prompts:
  ➢ You can only be known for 4 identifiers. You must be able to check the boxes on standard forms. You must give this one up. You are no longer this.
  ➢ Your life will be easier if you give this one up. It is gratifying to you now but it will hold you back. Toss it and feel free! You are no longer this.
  ➢ This identifier is being taken away from you. By force. You may not want to lose it, but people more powerful than you are taking it regardless. You can fight for it but you will lose. You are no longer this. (If students are reluctant to toss this slip, you can go over to them and demand they give it to you).
  ➢ You are only this if you dedicate your life to this. All other aspects of your life will be lost. You can give it up now and keep your last identifier for the rest of your life. Or else you will have to discard your last slip immediately and only focus on this, at the expense of any other identifiers you may gain in your life. You are no longer this, or you are always only this.

Adaptations / Differentiation

As there is no material output in this lesson, common differentiation strategies do not apply. If students are unclear about what an “identifier” is, provide examples (you might
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say “I’m a teacher”). Ensure students work individually and do not push them to respond if they are uncomfortable.

Evaluation / Assessment

Not applicable for this assignment due to its highly personal nature, though you may wish to award minor participation points to ensure engagement. Do not collect responses for review (simply discard) or ask students to identify themselves if they do not want to.

Materials

The following items will help record responses for individual activity and group discussion.
  • Pens and paper
  • Whiteboard/flipchart and marker

Notes

This is an emotive exercise. It should be done solemnly and with serious overtones. It is normal for students to be moved and affected. You will want to emphasize the concept of identity as being core to how we feel about ourselves, and how others judge us.

It is important to debrief this lesson. Participants do not need to share their specific identifiers unless they wish to do so. The process is what is important, and it can be linked to numerous examples of losing one’s identity (by choice or by force). (Casandra, May 2013)
Appendix D: Peace Content Outline

Content: (Education about peace)
• History of nonviolent revolutions
• Actions of nonviolent leaders
• Women’s history, suffragettes, current status of women
• World religions

Skills/Behaviors: (Education for Peace)
• Open-mindedness/ Critical Thinking (multiple viewpoints on controversial topics)
• Empathy
• Responsibility
• Self-reliance
• Care for others
• Team work
• Respect and Acceptance (Helen, February 2014)