Teaching for Social Justice and Approaches to Citizenship Education in the Social Studies Classroom

by

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Abstract

This study responds to lack of research regarding social justice education and approaches to citizenship education within elementary classrooms in Ontario. The study, which was completed through the interviewing of three classroom teachers, focuses on theoretical aspects of teaching for social justice within the context of citizenship education, and subsequent implications for students’ perceptions of self and teacher practice. Particular attention is paid to teachers’ conceptions of citizenship and citizenship education, the impact of social justice content integration, pedagogical practices, and institutional influences. This qualitative study highlights how the ambiguity surrounding conceptions of citizenship has created a scenario in which teachers are able to integrate their own social and political beliefs within the delivery of Ontario’s Citizenship Education Framework. Avenues for further study are offered, particularly within the area of the ethical teacher.
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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Research Study

A growing understanding of the plural nature of citizenship and identity has strengthened calls to examine the confusing nature of “educating for citizenship” (Bassey, 2010; Evans, 2006). The increasing interconnectedness of our world, through globalization, has resulted in a burgeoning conversation about the goal and purpose of citizenship education in Canada and what it means to be a ‘good’ citizen. Traditionally, there have been significant gaps between policy mandates and classroom practice. Interpretations of the purpose and definition of citizenship education were left to individual school boards, schools, and educators. Such variations allowed for citizenship education to manifest itself inconsistently across classrooms.

In 2013, the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) implemented a Citizenship Education Framework within every grade and course in the social studies, history, and geography curriculum (p. 9). Noting that citizenship education is an important facet of students’ overall education, the OME outlined four main elements of citizenship education deemed essential for understanding what it means to be a “responsible, active citizen in the community of the classroom and the diverse communities to which [students] belong within and outside the school”: active participation, identity, structures, and attributes (p. 9). These elements consolidated concerns of academics and educational professionals and attempted to define citizenship education as well as clarify its goals. The framework also aimed to establish a series of topics and terms related to citizenship education that teachers might use to underpin their social studies programs. Despite this move toward a more concrete framework, there still exists
an element of individual interpretation that allows for variance in the ways teachers choose to address citizenship education in the classroom. The implications of this can be quite significant when one considers another mounting trend in education: teaching for social justice.

Teaching for social justice is an educational philosophy that aims to instill values in our students through the exploration and/or addressing of social justice issues. More particularly, teaching for social justice aims to develop “a new kind of citizenship education” – one that encourages students to be active participants in the “fight for social change” and social justice (Bassey, 2010, p. 251). Social justice education not only requires students to acknowledge the systems of power and privilege that promote social inequality, but demands that students “critically examine oppression on institutional, cultural, and individual levels” in order to exact change (Hackman, 2005, p. 103-104). It is important to recognize that although those who teach for social justice operate within the current Citizenship Education Framework, they promote a competing vision of citizenship and what it means to be a ‘good’ citizen by emphasizing particular values and dispositions that are often mired in left-leaning political ideologies. For example, educators who focus on achieving an in-depth understanding of the world through the exploration of social and political contradictions often illuminate issues such as democracy and corporate power, economic inequality, racial inequality, gender inequality, aboriginal issues, and peace and justice. As Shirley Mthethwa-Sommers (2013) discovered in her qualitative research study involving social justice educators, these issues are often chosen as points of learning and discussion because of the educator’s own lived experience or personal narrative (p. 225 – 229).

Notions of citizenship are implicitly linked with understandings of social justice. In social identity theory, a social identity is a “person’s knowledge that he or she belongs to a social category or group” (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 225). According to Stets & Burke (2000), there are
two processes involved in social identity formation: (1) self-categorization, and (2) social comparison (p. 225). They argue that one of the consequences of self-categorization is an emphasis on perceived differences between self and ‘others’ (p. 226). The ambiguity surrounding conceptions of citizenship creates a scenario in which teachers are able to operate within a government-mandated framework, while simultaneously integrating their own political and social beliefs. This allows teachers to alter students’ perceptions of their own social identity, as well as others. Moreover, teachers that use their own personal narrative to demand that students examine the dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression, risk manipulating a person’s sense of self in order to meet their own personal agenda. This raises important ethical questions about the role of the teacher in determining and shaping student identity in relation to citizenship education.

**Purpose of the Study**

Although there is an extensive and rich literature dedicated to social justice education, the paucity of literature regarding citizenship education in Ontario is striking. Such a large gap in the literature indicates that there is a lack of attention being paid to the relationship between social justice education and its many derivatives (i.e., anti-racist, multicultural, globalist) and citizenship education within social studies classrooms in Ontario.

Also absent from the literature is the voice of Ontario teachers and students. Recent studies regarding social justice education remain exclusively within the realm of higher education (Applebaum, 2009, Campbell, 2013; Storms, 2012), and those scholars that do delve into the elementary panel are typically American (Bassey, 2010; Quin, 2009; Westeheimer, 2003). As such, the purpose of this study is to examine Ontario elementary teachers’ perceptions of citizenship education within the context of teaching for social justice. More specifically, this
study looks at social justice content integration and its consequences for instructional and assessment practices relating to citizenship education within the elementary social studies classroom.

The importance of this study to the greater educational community is highlighted when we consider the impact of teachers on students’ emerging intellectual and moral sensibilities (Campbell, 2013, p. 7, Hansen, 2001, p. 838 original source). Further, according to Erik Erikson’s *Lifespan Developmental Framework* teachers are students’ most important social agents during elementary school (O’Donnell, D’Amico, Schmid, et. al., 2008, p. 82). These factors, combined with the idea that Ontario social studies teachers are responsible for interpreting and implementing the new *Citizenship Education Framework*, emphasize the significance of determining the role personal values and beliefs play in deciding what sort of topics and dispositions are favoured by the classroom teacher.

**Research Questions**

The goals of my project are threefold: (1) to determine what “teaching for social justice” looks like in the Ontario social studies classroom, (2) to assess the role personal values and beliefs play in determining what social justice issues are addressed, and (3) to understand the subsequent implications for program development in relation to citizenship education. As such, the overall guiding question for this study is: How do elementary teachers integrate social justice content within the context of citizenship education in the social studies classroom?

In asking this question, I hope to understand not only how teachers choose what social justice issues to address, but also what this looks like in their classroom. What instructional strategies do they use to teach students about social justice issues? What views are addressed or expressed by the teacher? What fundamental understandings do the teachers hope to instill in
their students? Another aim of my study is to uncover the difficulties teachers have in implementing citizenship education within the classroom in an impartial way. In other words, is the new curriculum mandate enough or should there be an even clearer directive?

**Background of the Researcher**

My interest in the relationship between teaching for social justice and citizenship education is multifaceted. As a child I attended a rather progressive school in downtown Toronto where students were encouraged to passively absorb all of the teachers’ political ideologies, values, and beliefs. I was frequently reminded that the then premier of Ontario, Mike Harris, was a terrible man who hated children and poor people. Disagreement with this popular stance was often met with disapproval and I was frequently lumped into the categories of defiant and disruptive for simply asking questions or challenging teachers’ opinions. Such experiences were a common occurrence throughout my elementary school journey and I regularly wondered why teachers simply stated their opinions and beliefs as fact. Thus, my interest in the role of teachers’ beliefs, values, and political ideologies in determining classroom curricula is something that I carried with me into my pre-service journey.

As a pre-service candidate within the Master of Teaching program at OISE I was introduced to the concept of teaching for social justice through one of our mandatory classes. My professor self-identified as a social justice educator and noted that she applied a social justice framework to her instructional approach. While I appreciated her transparency, I became weary when I realized that voices were being silenced that disagreed with the narrative being put forth. For example, during a discussion regarding working conditions within factories in Bangladesh, the instructor claimed that Bengali workers were only making 10 cents a day. I informed my instructor that factory workers made more than a dollar a day, and that the Bengali government
had recently raised the minimum wage (Devnath, 2013), to which she responded “So what? What’s your point?”. This interaction reminded me of my experiences throughout elementary school and I became interested in exploring the implications of teaching for social justice within the classroom. How does such an approach affect all students? How do teachers assess whether or not something is right? These questions coalesced with another interest of mine: citizenship education.

Three key points inform my interest in citizenship education within the social studies classroom. First, I am a dual American-Canadian citizen. Second, I obtained my Bachelor of Arts from the University of Toronto with a focus in American Studies and History. Lastly, in 2013 the Ministry of Education put forth a new social studies curriculum that features inquiry-based approaches to instruction and a citizenship education framework. I believe inquiry involves looking at a variety of perspectives, asking critical questions, and analyzing or assessing the validity of perspectives or opinions in relation to any given topic. Students should be encouraged to ask questions and think critically in the classroom – regardless of whether or not their values or beliefs align with my own. Given my experience as an elementary student and pre-service candidate, I was naturally drawn to the social studies classroom as an environment for exploring my research topic.

Overview

Chapter 1 includes the introduction and purpose of the study, the research questions, as well as how I came to be involved in this topic and study. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature, looking particularly at conceptions of citizenship and the ambiguity surrounding purposes of citizenship education. This chapter also explores how the transformative nature of social justice education connects to citizenship education initiatives in Ontario. Chapter 3
provides the methodology and procedure used in this study, including information about the participants and data collection instruments. Chapter 4 identifies the research participants and describes the data as it addresses the research questions. Finally, Chapter 5 includes the limitations of this study, conclusions, insights, recommendations for practice, and further study. References and a list of appendices follow at the end.
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptions of Citizenship

The term ‘citizenship’ is politically contested. Pluralistic approaches to the topic have exposed the challenges nations have in balancing the various identities subscribed to by individuals, and establishing a framework for understanding the roles and dispositions associated with “citizenship” (Birdwell et al., 2013; Purvis and Hunt, 1999). Adding to the challenge is the existence of competing political and social ideologies designed to reinforce the notion of the multifaceted citizen-one who exists both within and outside of the nation. Thus, the increasingly diverse nature of society has forced us to re-conceptualize citizenship and patriotism, as we understand them today (Birdwell et al., 2013, p. 185).

Scholars note that, traditionally, citizenship in Canada has been constructed in both elitist and passive terms (Bothwell, 1993; Sears & Hughes, 1996). Rather than pursuing the American ideals of “liberty, individualism, achievement, and optimism,” Canada institutionalized “authority, order, ascription, and a certain pessimism” (Regenstreif, 1974; Sears & Hughes, 1996). The institutionalization of such ideals becomes very obvious when we consider that historically, Canada has not supported widespread citizen participation – take for example, the repression of voting rights for women, immigrants, and Indigenous people. The passive nature of Canadian citizenship is emphasized in the 2004 Ontario Social Studies curriculum where we learn that “Social studies seeks to examine and understand communities, from the local to the global, and the nature of citizenship within them. [Students] learn about Canada and the role of citizens in a democratic society within a culturally diverse and interdependent world” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004, p.2). The language used in the document relegates citizenship to nothing more than a topic to be examined within the context of roles and responsibilities.
However, in recent years there has been a move toward a more activist understanding of citizenship. In 1996, Alan Sears constructed a *Conceptions of Citizenship* model that compared themes of sovereignty, government, and citizen expectations from “elitist” and “activist” perspectives (p. 4). Predicated on the belief that citizens are “expected and enabled, to participate in the affairs of the state,” Sears went on to analyze conceptions of citizenship within the education curriculum throughout Canada (p. 5). His findings suggested that there was a level of ambiguity between conceptions of citizenship being applied within various curricula and that there needed to be a more concrete definition provided or there would be great variance in the type of citizenship education received (Sears, 1996, p. 9-12).

Sears’ study established a framework for other scholars to work within when analyzing notions of citizenship and citizenship education in Canada. Both Mark Evans and Joel Westheimer produced comprehensive qualitative studies that analyzed teachers' and school districts' perceptions of citizenship and their various applications, using Sears’ study to underpin their findings. In his 2006 report, Evans found that important strands of citizenship education, such as participatory and critical approaches, were often ignored. He also determined that while the dominant views of citizenship – the civic-republican (responsibilities-based) and liberal (rights-based) – offered divergent stances on what it meant to “educate for citizenship”, they were both orderly and passive (p. 413). Comparatively, Westheimer (2003) argued that there are three types of citizen: the personally responsible citizen, the participatory citizen, and the justice-oriented citizen. He noted that among the competing visions of citizenship there remained a lack of discussion about the types of values, interests, and ideas embedded in the varied notions, but that each of these visions claimed to be fulfilling the vision of ‘democratic citizenship’.
A recent report by Birdwell et al. (2013), found that conceptions of citizenship and patriotism have evolved into “an active notion of citizenship that includes community engagement, a sense of solidarity and volunteering” (p. 185). They argue that if modern definitions of citizenship are to be applied accurately, they must include some aspect relating to the ‘multifaceted citizen’ (p. 187). Moreover, they suggest that we are unable to simply define citizenship as an interaction with the state, as many who subscribe to different cultural and ethnic identities view state institutions as places of oppression (p. 187). Birdwell et al.’s position further convolutes attempts to establish a concrete definition of ‘good’ citizenship and a working purpose of citizenship education.

What is Citizenship Education?

According to Mark Evans (2003), “concerns about the lack of civic literacy among youth, the civic well-being of contemporary societies, and [the] forces of change,” have stimulated a discussion regarding the role public education should play in readying youth for their role as citizens (p. n/a). However, an analysis of the historical trajectory of citizenship education within Canada, and more specifically Ontario, reveals that a simple discussion is nearly impossible. Since understandings of what it means to be a ‘good’ citizen vary considerably, conceptions of citizenship education are equally diverse.

Evans’ (2003) study Educating for Citizenship in Schools in Canada provides a comprehensive look at the shifting characterizations of citizenship education in schools. He notes that in the early decades of the 20th century, public education was viewed as the “logical” way to “initiate” young people into their role as citizens. Two central purposes of citizenship education dominated public and educational thought at the time: to instill within students the personal characteristics of a ‘good’ citizen and to nurture a sense of being Canadian. Ultimately, schools
acted as a way to pass on the understandings that students would need to become productive, thriving, Canadian citizens. By the 1950s, a shift had occurred through which the government and educators hoped to depoliticize the nature of citizenship education by limiting attention to concepts such as “conflict and power” and “political participation” (Evans, 2003). Political participation came to include variations of ‘serving’, with a strong emphasis placed on volunteer and charity work. Thus, someone who was kind and neighborly could be by definition a good citizen.

Recent conceptions of citizenship education have been expanded to include aims and goals that are typically aligned with the values and beliefs of social justice educators. Joel Westheimer (2003) looked at three different schools in Ontario in an effort to provoke a discussion about the nature of “democratic citizenship”. What he found was that each school embodied a similarly broad variety of goals and practices, but approached citizenship education very differently. In one high school, teachers looked at democratic citizenship through the lens of personal responsibility and placed a strong emphasis on the provincial requirement for community service (Westheimer, 2003). In contrast, one elementary school noted that its “central curricular mission [was] to teach students about social justice, about [how] to improve society, and about specific ways to affect change, such as community drives, grass-roots campaigns and protests” (Westheimer, 2003). If we consider Alan Sears’ Conceptions of Citizenship Model from 1996, we might argue that the elementary school from Westheimer’s study would be placed squarely at the activist end of the continuum, whereas the high school might be placed somewhere in the middle. Westheimer’s study effectively demonstrates the radically different approaches being undertaken by Ontario schools in regard to citizenship education. It also raises
questions about what is occurring at a more micro-level within the classroom and what exactly informs teachers’ understandings or perceptions of citizenship education.

**A Transformative Agenda: Teaching for Social Justice**

The call for more activist-orientated forms of citizenship education has been informed and strengthened by the move toward *teaching for social justice*. In 2003, Mark Evans identified a variety of instructional approaches to citizenship education that incorporated and utilized case analysis, public issue research projects, model town councils, peace building programs, community participation activities, public information exhibits, and online international linkages. What is notable about these instructional approaches is that they all aim to develop informed decision-making skills, analytical skills, ethical reasoning, and political participation (Evans, 2003). Social justice education scholar James Banks (2009) notes:

“teaching for social justice, diversity, and citizenship in a global world is a new kind of citizenship education [that] will enable students to acquire a delicate balance of cultural, national, and global identifications, and to understand the ways in which knowledge is constructed; to become knowledge producers; and to participate in civic action to create a more humane nation and world” (p. 13).

Banks’ argument is drawn from the multicultural approach to education through which school reform is designed to represent educational equality for students by integrating five key educational practices: integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and school culture reform (Banks, 2009, p. 14). He contends that such an approach will allow for students to have an equal opportunity to learn and will ultimately support their development as citizens and individuals in society.

However, like the field of citizenship education, there remains a lack of consensus about the goals and purpose of social justice education in developing citizens and what a good citizen looks like. For example, Magnus O’Bassey (2010) contends that multicultural education focuses
more on cultural differences than on education for common or civic citizenship (p. 250). She contends that a critical social foundations approach is more appropriate for developing citizenship education programs because it conceptualizes the connection between social justice, democratic citizenship, and social activism (p. 251). In her view, students should be “active participants in the fight for social change and social justice through social activism” because it allows the oppressed to channel their frustrations in a way that enacts social change (p. 251).

A commonality between much of the social justice literature is the call for ‘action’. Heather W. Hackman (2005) looks at how to teach effectively from a social justice perspective and offers five essential components for social justice education programs. She argues that “action and social change” are critical in helping students move from “cynicism and despair to hope and possibility” and that educators should explore “radical approaches such as grassroots protests, street actions, and its redistribution to the masses via economic and political access” (Hackman, 2005, p. 106). Such radical views have been espoused by other social justice education scholars (Applebaum, 2009; Dilworth, 2004; Storms, 2012) and have contributed to a concern about the place of social justice in education. As Elizabeth Campbell (2013) notes: “scholars in this field have defined social justice educators in terms that emphasize their role as societal change agents, activists engaged in sociopolitical analysis of the state and its inequitable institutions, including schools” (p. 9). Chapman and Hobel (2010) argue that social justice educators should unify in order to transform schools and society (p. 5) and that students and teachers must move beyond studying social injustices to active transformation (North, 2008, p. 1118). Social justice education scholars elucidate the transformative agenda of social justice approaches to education and emphasize the activist role that teachers and students must take in their quest for equitable and fair approaches to the world.
The Social Justice and Citizenship Education Connection

How does the transformative nature of social justice education connect to citizenship education in Ontario? As singular definitions of citizenship and citizenship education continue to elude the field, there remains an ambiguity between what the Ontario Ministry of Education mandates and what both schools and teachers interpret. New to the 2013 Ontario social studies curriculum is a “Citizenship Education Framework”. Within the framework are four pillars of citizenship education designed to address the evolving understandings of citizenship within a diverse society. One of these pillars is “active participation” which asks students to “work for the common good in local, national, and global communities (p. 10). The Ontario curriculum asks teachers to use language such as stewardship, leadership, advocacy, and peace building, when teaching students to investigate controversial issues, voice informed opinions on matters relevant to the community, and participate in their community (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 10).

However, there is significant room for the teacher to choose what ‘controversial’ issues to address (and ignore), and to determine what constitutes an ‘informed opinion’. When one considers the trend toward teaching for social justice and the transformative nature of social justice education – concerns begin to rise about the values, beliefs, opinions, and dispositions that are favoured by the teacher and how this might impact student learning. For example, Barbara Applebaum (2009) argues that while it is expected that teachers strive to be “balanced and fair” in their approach to teaching, social justice educators must operate under the pretense that school systems in themselves are not balanced and fair (p. 382). She further emphasizes her point by stating: “What it means to be balanced and fair in the classroom might require some silencing of voices that are derailing the discussion” (382). Campbell (2013), writing from a non-social justice perspective, describes several instances within post-secondary institutions where
those students who did not adhere to the worldview put forth by social justice educators, were unfairly penalized or censured (p. 25). She goes on to note that those who oppose social justice educators are judged to be wrong (Campbell, 2013, p. 26). In her work, *Teaching for Hope: The Ethics of Shattering World Views*, Megan Boler (2004) uses her own personal narrative to accentuate Campbell’s point. She highlights how a student in one of her classes refused to engage with her ideas and beliefs regarding oppression and social justice. It is important to note that this Social Foundations of Education class was required for the completion of teacher education program in the United States. By her own admission, she notes that the student’s unwillingness to engage with her ideas caused her to “suffer” emotionally and “obsessively wish” that he would engage with the material (2004, p. 122). Moreover, Boler (2004) admits to wanting to penalize the student for not listening to, in its entirety, a cultural event that she believed would “transform” his thinking (p. 123), and to finding herself “quite fearful” of the student when he wanted to engage in a discussion during her office hours (p. 123). Boler justifies her reaction to this situation by stating that she does not feel that it is her responsibility to coddle those she perceives to have lived a life of privilege or to validate desires to not recognize injustice. She further asserts that students have “no right” to resist the teaching of social justice education (p. 124). Behaviours such as those exhibited by Boler, are unacceptable when one considers that members of the Ontario College of Teachers are to demonstrate the ethical standard of *Care* by expressing their commitment to students’ well-being and learning through positive influence, professional judgment, and empathy in practice. Boler’s actions did not appear particularly empathetic, nor did they appear to exert a positive influence. Rather, Boler villainized her student for disagreeing with her and took it upon herself to penalize him for not engaging with the material in a way that she deemed acceptable.
What is disconcerting about the statements made by Applebaum and Boler is that they are instructors within Faculty of Education programs in North America. While the work of university professors within Faculty of Education programs is unique from that of the elementary classroom teacher, professors’ sphere of influence can prove to be problematic. The overarching goal of teacher education programs is to prepare pre-service teachers for their professional journey in classrooms with children. Thus, when particular values and beliefs are espoused at the pre-service level, these views may be brought into the elementary classroom, where teachers might begin to make decisions informed by their political and social beliefs. These beliefs inform the choice of issues to be addressed, the types of opinions heard, and the extent to which an issue might be explored in the classroom.
Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

Procedure

This phenomenological study on elementary teachers’ perceptions of citizenship education within the context of ‘teaching for social justice’ in the social studies classroom was undertaken by reviewing relevant literature and conducting interviews with teachers who are currently practicing, or have practiced, a teaching model that includes social justice approaches. Educators who were willing to share information about their teaching practice and had experience developing programming for social studies classes were chosen as participants. Participants were also chosen on the basis of environment. For example, I sought out participants who worked within a designated “social justice” school, as well as those who worked within a traditional environment.

Interviews were conducted in agreement with the participant as to time, location, and medium. The interview questions were open- and closed-ended (see Appendix B) so as to allow participants opportunities to both respond directly to the question and to elaborate on their experiences and teaching practices. Each interview was recorded and fully transcribed. Analysis included multiple readings through the written transcriptions in an effort to identify significant phrases or statements that pertained directly to teachers’ experiences integrating social justice approaches in relation to citizenship education.

Instruments of Data Collection

Instruments of data collection included semi-structured interviews, featuring open- and closed-ended questions such as:

- How do you approach or incorporate citizenship education within your Social Studies program?
• How do you apply a social justice framework to your social studies programming OR how have you approached ‘teaching for social justice’?

• How do you decide what social justice issues to address?

• What are some of the strategies you use to assess student learning when teaching a social justice issue?

Such questions contextualized the experiences of participants while providing opportunities for elaboration.

Participants

Participants were chosen on the basis of the following criterion:

• Experience within an elementary Social Studies classroom (Grades 1-6)
• Experience integrating citizenship education within their Social Studies program
• Experience incorporating social justice issues within the Social Studies curricula

The following participants participated in this study through the completion of an interview between 25-35 minutes in length:

1. Tanya* is an elementary teacher of 5 years who is currently teaching a combined grade 5/6 class. Her current school is a lighthouse school for social justice education and she self-identifies as a social justice educator.

2. Charlotte* is a new teacher in her first long-term occasional assignment. She is currently teaching a Grade 6 class.

3. Brenda* has been teaching for 12 years and is currently teaching a Grade 5 core class.

Data Collection and Analysis

Following the phenomenological approach outlined by Creswell (2013), the analysis of these interviews included multiple readings through the written transcriptions in an effort to

* Pseudonyms have been used to maintain the privacy of participants.
identify significant phrases or statements that pertained directly to teachers’ experiences using social justice approaches within the social studies classroom. In Vivo Coding was initially used to ensure that concepts were kept as close as possible to participants’ own language (Saldaña, 2012). Codes were then analyzed to determine commonalities and themes present among all of the transcripts. These themes were integrated within the phenomenon of ‘teaching for social justice’ and the context of citizenship education. Particular emphasis was placed on how participants chose what social justice approaches and/or issues to integrate and the role of their experiences in doing so. Findings were then validated with participants.

**Ethical Review Procedures**

This research study followed the ethics protocol for students within the Master of Teaching Program at the University of Toronto’s Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. As such, recruitment of participants was restricted to members from the Ontario College of Teachers. Recruitment was conducted primarily through discussion with knowledgeable professors from OISE. All participants were provided with a copy of a consent form and expected to read and sign the form prior to the start of the interview (see Appendix A). Interviewees were also provided with a copy of the Interview Questions (Appendix B) to ensure clarity, and questions regarding the topic and purpose of the research were encouraged to ensure fair use of data. All interviews were recorded using a recording device and transcribed in their entirety. Confidentiality was maintained through the use of pseudonyms. Participants were encouraged to alter the names of students, staff, schools, and/or school boards during the interview. Before the interview, interviewees were reminded that their participation in this research project was voluntary and that they may opt out from the interview or any of the
research questions, without consequence. Participants were offered a copy of the final project, if desired.

Limitations

There are two major limitations to this research project. First, the small sample size makes it difficult to pinpoint trends within participant responses. As such, any identified similarities or themes in participant responses are not generalizable. The small sample size also limits the amount of variance between experiences of participants.

The second limitation of this study is the ability to locate potential participants who have experience utilizing a social justice approach toward citizenship education in the Social Studies classroom. For example, I was directed by knowledgeable professors toward the Educating for Peace and Justice: Action for Safe and Equitable Classrooms, Schools and Communities conference hosted by OISE as a potential environment for recruiting participants. I chose to attend a workshop hosted by two educators from an Ontario public school board who had experience within the elementary panel and using a social justice framework. Although both of the educators are experienced in their field and currently work at a school where social justice frameworks are applied, they did not know what citizenship education was and were unaware of the framework located within the Ontario Social Studies curriculum documents. Thus, I was only able to find one participant who had direct experience applying a social justice framework to their entire practice. The other participants incorporated aspects of teaching for social justice, primarily utilizing social justice issues as a form of educating students about the experiences of others, but did not explicitly apply a social justice framework to their practice.
Chapter 4: FINDINGS

The information gathered for this study highlights not only that there are multiple ways to incorporate social justice education into the Social Studies curriculum, but that there are multiple understandings of what social justice education looks like in relation to citizenship education. Although the participants of this study did demonstrate some significant similarities, there were also differences, indicating that, while teachers may be interested in integrating social justice issues within the context of citizenship education, they arrive at this idea in different ways. For example, the participants featured all had various levels of experience in integrating social justice within their curricular programs, such as through the exploration of issues related to gender and race or through the explicit teaching of systems of power and privilege, but arrived at similar conclusions about how citizenship education should be addressed within the classroom. To illustrate the process of how teaching for social justice is integrated within the classroom, and address the research question on how this integration operates within the context of citizenship education, I have focused on themes that demonstrate this process, such as conceptions of citizenship and citizenship education, participants’ preferred learning goals, pedagogical practices, and institutional influences.

Conceptions of Citizenship and Citizenship Education

In his article Educating for Citizenship: Schools in Canada, Mark Evans (2003) argues that there are many challenges in “fostering a sense of citizenship that encourages social cohesion and is respectful of multiple identities” (Evans, 2003, n/a). He notes that educators generally have a difficult time reconciling between the “inclusive” and “exclusive” aspects of citizenship, and subsequently delivering citizenship education programming that promotes social cohesion while remaining open to students’ various understandings of self (Evans, 2003, n/a).
Moreover, Evans (2006) notes that the dominant views of citizenship – the responsibilities-based (civic republican) and the rights-based (the liberal) – offer “varied understandings of what it means to educate for citizenship” (p. 413). This allows educators to incorporate their own personal understanding of citizenship within their social studies programming, potentially emphasizing rights over responsibilities or vice versa.

In this research study, participants’ characterizations and understanding of citizenship and citizenship education varied. When asked to discuss what the term citizenship means to them on a more personal level, each participant offered their own interpretation of responsibilities-based versus rights-based citizenship. For example, Charlotte emphasized a rights-based version of citizenship:

“I think that the term citizenship, I guess it’s really subjective depending on who you are as an individual. I think that there are some people who are active, you know, they get involved politically, and participate in every election. They feel that, that is something that is really important to them, that they should be involved in politics because it is an opportunity that is not necessarily afforded everywhere. But really, I think that a basic understanding of citizenship is that you were born here, or lived here long enough to pass a test, and are able to access things like schooling and healthcare. You are entitled to things like government assistance and to vote in elections. Beyond that, citizenship doesn’t really mean anything in particular to me, only a basic understanding.”

Charlotte’s own interpretation of citizenship is tied to the perceived political, economic, and social rights that are afforded to Canadian citizens. Her interpretation was very different from that of Tanya and Brenda who offered a more responsibilities-based version of citizenship, particularly emphasizing the importance of collective identity, collective contribution, and taking action. In her response, Brenda noted that her understanding of citizenship included “stewardship, being an active participant in the world that you live, and making decisions that are not only about you, but decisions that affect the environment, people, and others”. This activist and collectivist understanding of citizenship was also reflected in Tanya’s response:
“When I think of citizenship, I think about contributing members of society, where people know their role and are working towards the greater good of a group of people, whether it be a family, a community, a province, a nation, but there is a collective identity and collective contribution between people so that others, that people are benefitting from whatever gifts people bring to the world. There is a common goal of social justice. I think it’s the end goal of social justice, that we are all participating citizens, so that there is justice in the world.”

Not only do the participants’ responses highlight varied understandings of citizenship, they underscore the difficulty teachers face in implementing consistent programming with respect to citizenship education. The manner in which citizenship education programming is developed and approached within the classroom depends primarily on the teacher’s own perceptions, beliefs, and understandings. Thus, although the Ontario Ministry of Education has mandated a new Citizenship Education Framework within its social studies curricula, teachers interviewed for this study tended to emphasize their own beliefs, values, and interests when approaching citizenship education. For example, Tanya notes that for her, one of her passions about teaching for social justice is:

“highlighting social injustice and empowering students with the language to be able to name injustice. And I believe that when students are able to name injustice then you can call them to action, because citizenship is a verb, it is not a noun in my world. It’s doing something for the greater good. So when students know how to name injustice, then they can think of ways to actively progress change and create social justice. So therefore, that is citizenship in action.”

In this case, social justice education and citizenship education are intrinsically linked. Tanya believes that she is unable to separate the two, as citizenship requires students to take action, progress change, and create social justice. She further emphasizes this point when she states that in her classroom, they talk about citizenship by looking at the various identities we bring as individuals. Tanya ensures that her beliefs regarding citizenship and social justice education are assigned to students through students’ collective identification as “[Teacher’s
name] Crew”. She argues that this gives students a sense “of collective identity” and that students begin to embody the “kind of characteristics we want to display”.

The characteristics and dispositions Tanya chooses to emphasize when discussing citizenship education are largely driven by her own personal values and passion for social justice, as well as her own knowledge and lack thereof. She notes that when choosing what social justice issues to address, she starts within her comfort zone, and “because [she is] so passionate about how the politics of identity impacts how people experience the world, and how people navigate the world and systems”, she typically starts from “looking at deconstructing identity” and power dynamics. As such, students have an opportunity to “engage in the ideas [she is] presenting”.

Conversely, Charlotte’s approach to incorporating citizenship education within her practice transcends beyond the social studies classroom and involves several educators. She notes:

“When I teach, I don’t necessarily think ‘this is part of citizenship education’, even though I am aware that is part of the new curriculum. Honestly, I am more concerned with meeting the curricular expectations and presenting information through an inquiry approach. However, I do work with a grade team, and within that grade-team we are exploring cross-curricular approaches to citizenship education through the study of global issues and the lens of activism”.

Although Charlotte expressed a more rights-based interpretation of citizenship in the early portion of our interview, her work with her grade team resulted in an approach that was separate from her own personal beliefs. She continues:

“We are starting out with a series of lessons based on a variety of global issues from around the world. We sort of just picked global issues at random – ones that sounded good like gender and race, and might be interesting to our grade level. Our literacy lead, however, has really pushed for us to incorporate notions of activism and activist participation. In other words, how can we make our students take action or become activists for global issues. This fits in with the citizenship education framework because it asks our students to be active participants and work for the
common good in local, global, and national communities. So, it’s this idea that the person that you are in Toronto can be the person that you are globally, and that you can affect change around the world.”

Evident throughout Tanya’s and Charlotte’s responses are linkages between social justice education’s goal to “fight for social change and social justice through social activism” (O’Bassey, 2010, p. 251) and citizenship education. Even though they are not explicitly using the Citizenship Education Framework to guide their approach to citizenship education, both educators are using citizenship education as a vehicle for encouraging activist oriented versions of citizenship that align with social justice pedagogies.

**Learning Goals: The Big Ideas**

The interview data suggested that the preferred learning goals of teachers transcended beyond the dominant rights versus responsibilities understandings of citizenship, to include shifts in perspective, and an understanding of one's identity. Data also revealed that participants discussed their preferred learning goals and enduring understandings in three general areas: knowledge acquisition and being informed about local, national, and global issues; developing the skills required of citizenship; and exploring diverse beliefs, values, and notions of social justice.

Participants emphasized knowledge acquisition, particularly the understanding of key concepts such as rights and responsibilities and concepts of disciplinary thinking, throughout their responses. One of the big ideas that Charlotte wanted her students to walk away with in relation to citizenship education, was the understanding that “we live in a democracy [and that we] have the ability to participate in that democracy”. She also wanted her students to: “have a basic understanding of the rules and the laws that govern Canada and Ontario, and how such rules and laws can affect them”. Brenda wanted her students to focus on getting informed about
Various social justice issues and understanding their own positions in relation to those issues: “I want them to be able to develop an understanding of the inquiry model so that they can investigate various issues, become informed about those issues, and to be able to articulate their positions in relation to the issues they have investigated”. Finally, Tanya wanted to equip her students with robust vocabularies that allowed them to recognize their roles and responsibilities as they relate systems of power and privilege and identity. Her overarching goal is to have her students use words associated with the concepts of disciplinary thinking (i.e., significance, continuity, perspective) in addition to those associated with social justice, to actively name power and privilege, as well as remain aware of their own systems of power and privilege in the world.

Participants’ responses also focused on developing the skills required of citizenship, although the skills discussed varied. For example, Charlotte and Brenda wanted students to develop an understanding of perspective – particularly through the exploration of issues related to personal and societal rights and responsibilities – whereas Tanya hoped to equip her students with the skills necessary to assert their agency. As Tanya notes:

“Power and privilege exist. And you have agency. How do you assert agency? You use the language of power. So we have to learn the language of power, and we have to keep on learning the code. We have to be great code switchers. When you are able to code switch and know the language of power, and know how to navigate the systems, then you can exert agency.”

Thus, while each participant believes it important and relevant to develop the skills required of citizenship, the particular skill being developed varies.

Common throughout each of the three interviewees’ responses was a desire to have students investigate moral and ethical dimensions of developments, events, and issues. This was often framed in relation to the inquiry-model and understanding perspective, but each participant
discussed the importance of this skill in preparing students for life within a globalized world. This investigation of moral and ethical dimensions of developments, events, and issues, tied directly into the participants’ preferred learning goal of exploring diverse beliefs, values, and notions of social justice. Tanya was very vocal about her position and desire to expose students to notions of power, privilege, and identity. Of particular importance was the idea that “hey, it doesn’t matter if you work hard enough, some things, for example, the body you come in, the language you speak, the cultural background you come from – those are strikes against you”. One of her central goals was to expose students to notions of social justice and the value of collective identity and collective action. In comparison, Charlotte wanted her students to engage with notions of social justice and walk away with the understanding that there are various ways of experiencing the world and that just because you “empathize with one thing and not another, [that doesn’t] make [you] a bad citizen”. Rather, “it’s a matter of being aware that how you experience a particular event or issue is not always the way others are going to experience the same thing. And we have to be aware of that if we are going to create a world in which everyone feels safe within their respective communities” (Charlotte, October 19, 2014).

Absent from the data was any focus on fostering a sense of responsibility to participate in civic life. As such, even though participants’ preferred learning goals required students to be informed, aware, and open-minded, their enduring impression did not involve taking action in civic life. This finding is a stark contrast to the call for action espoused by educators who teach for social justice.

**Pedagogical Practices**

Comprehensive studies regarding how we educate for citizenship and the instructional approaches that effectively accommodate broadened conceptions of citizenship are largely absent
from the literature. In his 2003 study, Mark Evans found that Canadian teachers, who wished to explore and integrate new understandings of citizenship into the classroom, and in school-wide practices, had difficulty accessing resources or ideas to assist them (p. n/a). In order to address this disconnect between teachers and citizenship education resources, Evans highlighted work done by Ken Osborne in 1996. Osborne’s (1996) work suggested that teachers emphasize open, trusting and collaborative classroom climates, as well as allow students to develop a deepened understanding of Canada and the world through problems-based approaches. These suggestions align with many of the pedagogical practices undertaken by the interviewees. The interview data demonstrated that teachers translated their learning goals into pedagogical practices through shaping their classroom environments, and using a variety of instructional and assessment practices.

Participants shaped their classroom-learning environment by nurturing conditions for student involvement and inclusion, and modeling democratic practices. In Tanya’s classroom, students were included in the development of classroom rules and expectations. In order to scaffold a deeper understanding of citizenship for her students, Tanya had students “think for the first couple days of school, what are the things that you need as students from each other, from myself, and from themselves, to support this greater good of learning”. She also emphasized inclusion by bringing together her students under the banner of “[Teacher’s name] Crew”. Although the characteristics and dispositions demonstrated under this banner aligned with Tanya’s own social and political values, she felt that the collective identity developed allowed for all students to feel included within the classroom environment.

Instructional practices across participants were similar in that all three utilized case studies and/or the exploration of local and global issues in the news to engage with social justice
topics. More particularly, Charlotte and Tanya chose issues connected to gender and racial equality to emphasize the perspectives and experiences of various groups within Canada and Ontario, whereas Brenda tried to emphasize community experiences. All participants agreed that the topics addressed must be palatable for kids – demonstrating professional judgment when choosing which topics to discuss. Moreover, all participants utilized these social justice case studies in an effort to develop students’ critical-thinking capacities. Although the degree of critical-thinking varied, each educator emphasized aspects of critical-thinking in some way: the importance of “constructing understanding and developing a position” (Brenda, December 16, 2014), “coming up with an argument and defending it”, encouraging students to look at “every avenue” (Charlotte, October 19, 2014), and general investigations into topics (Tanya, December 4, 2014).

Assessment practices varied among educators, with Tanya grounding her assessment in the chosen social justice issue she was attempting to address, Brenda looking at the quality of questions being asked by her students (i.e. do they leave room for more avenues of study?), and Charlotte determining whether or not her students could “present an argument and defend it”. Notably, Charlotte was the only educator who suggested the use of the achievement chart as a tool for guiding her practice.

Evidently, many of the pedagogical practices employed by the participants aligned with Ken Osborne’s recommendations. Each participant attempted to emphasize open, trusting and collaborative classroom climates, as well as provide opportunities for deeper study through the use of inquiry-models and case studies. As such, through modeling – each participant was able to integrate teaching for social justice within the context of citizenship education, although the explicit teaching of citizenship concepts may have been absent from the lessons being delivered.
The findings in this section raise important questions about the sphere of influence teachers have, and how every choice made impacts students’ perceptions of self and what it means to be a ‘good’ citizen.

**Institutional Influences**

Institutional influences were extremely prevalent among all three participants’ responses. Each participant identified various ways in which educational and political institutions influenced and shaped their classroom practice. These influences can be broken down into three categories: (1) school administration, (2) local school board, and (3) Ontario Ministry of Education.

In her interview, Brenda identified both the Ontario Ministry of Education and her local school board as having a significant influence on her approach to citizenship education. She noted that: “Since the revision [to the Social Studies curriculum] there has been a big push from the Ministry to really start teaching these skill sets – positive habits of mind, of the inquiry, of the connection to current events and issues”. In addition, Brenda highlighted how her local school board has broken down the Ministry’s concepts “into six different subtopics…and the inquiry process” in an effort to align the curriculum with the “board mission statement of having their students being democratic citizens that are able to be active in the world that they live in.

Charlotte and Tanya both emphasized how their local school board, in addition to their school administration, influenced and shaped their approach to citizenship education. Charlotte discussed the implications of her administration’s expectation that grade teams/divisions plan together:

“It’s not explicit, in terms of me thinking this is my citizenship education framework…we [are looking] at attributes, active participation, …how students respect others’ perspectives, developing empathy for others, and exploring issues related to personal and societal rights and responsibilities. We are addressing it
inadvertently. But because I must plan with a grade team/division, I have ended up affecting a bunch of students and approaching citizenship education in a particular way.”

She also notes that her school board pushes character education, which is one-fourth of the Citizenship Education Framework as outlined in the “attributes” section. Charlotte emphasizes that her school board wants “you to address attributes that would be associated with having good character, which is in turn connected to this citizenship ideal, so we have to address these every month”.

As Tanya is an educator within a “lighthouse school” for social justice, the influence of her school administration has been integral in developing her approach to citizenship education. She notes:

“The leadership of the school is so committed to social justice and citizenship education that our pillars are six elements of social justice [and the] seven elements of citizenship. So whenever we hear anything from our leaders of the building, it’s founded in the six or seven principles. My principal is passionate about social justice; he has been involved in social justice advocacy for years, and that fire he brings to his leadership. So if you walk around our school, you see elements of social justice in the staff, and it’s reflected in the way that money is spent, and the opportunities that are provided to staff and students.”

Tanya welcomes the influence and leadership style, noting that the approach of her administration allows her to “be at home here, where [she] knows [she is] being supported”. Moreover, Tanya embodies the message of her administrators and wants to take their influence one step further by getting out there and “infecting” her local school board. She argues that theoretically, the board attempts to create a space for those who are typically marginalized by emphasizing equity and inclusion in their policy mandates and practices, particularly through her board’s “Equity and Inclusivity Strategy”.
Such institutional support for her practice allows for Tanya to feel empowered when integrating aspects of social justice education within her approach to citizenship education, and ensures that all of her students are engaged with key concepts and tenets of social justice. Thus, each participant is directly influenced by institutional policies and practices – at localized and provincial levels – and this influence is evident within their approach to citizenship education in the classroom.

**Summary**

While each research participant had different reasons for integrating social justice programming within their classroom, the methods they report in their description of teacher practice are similar. Each interviewee spoke of a link between citizenship education, social justice, and institutional influences; that school, board, and ministry policy directly influenced the manner in which each teacher approached citizenship education in the classroom. All participants expressed a belief that the incorporation of social justice, whether through the exploration of issues or through explicit teaching of systems of privilege and power, promoted the development of a critical-thinking and general awareness of the world. However, these beliefs were directly influenced by the teacher’s own perception of self and experience as an educator and individual operating within complex political and educational systems. This study therefore presents not only how “teaching for social justice” is incorporated within the context of citizenship education in the Social Studies classroom, but possible future directions for inquiry into the role personal narratives play in determining the social justice topics addressed and the dispositions favoured by the classroom teacher.
Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

The previous chapter outlined theoretical foundations of teaching for social justice, as well as strategies used by teachers to integrate components of social justice within the context of citizenship education. This chapter will discuss the implications of incorporating social justice issues in the Social Studies classroom, particularly in relation to the *Citizenship Education Framework*. Through an analysis of the data gathered from the study’s three participants, this chapter will outline some of the benefits and disadvantages of teaching for social justice, as well as the impact of this pedagogical approach on students’ enduring understanding of citizenship and self. This chapter will also offer recommendations for further study, which may aid in the implementation of a *Citizenship Education Framework* that is separate from the delivering teacher’s own political and social beliefs.

Teaching for Social Justice in Relation to Citizenship Education

Benefits

Participants’ characterizations of citizenship education and teaching for social justice learning goals revealed the depth and breadth of contemporary conceptions of citizenship. For the most part, participants generally agreed that citizenship education should be addressed through the study of local and global issues. Variation existed, however, in terms of the issues given priority and the depth provided. In addition, while each participant was interested in integrating aspects of social justice education, the purpose for doing so was determined by individual experiences as individuals and educators operating within complex political and social systems. For example, even though Charlotte and Tanya incorporated teaching about gender and racial equality in their approach to citizenship education, Tanya did so as a means of educating her students about systems of power, privilege, and oppression. She took an active interest in
ensuring that her students were equipped with robust vocabularies that would support them to assert their agency. In contrast, Charlotte utilized issues about gender and racial equality to emphasize critical-thinking processes and develop her students’ awareness of the world. Thus, the incorporation of social justice issues within one’s practice is only one aspect of “teaching for social justice”.

Admittedly, it was my interview with Tanya, an educator operating within a “lighthouse school” for social justice that really challenged my thinking regarding teaching for social justice and conceptions of citizenship. It was through her insights that I was able to ascertain some of the potential benefits of teaching for social justice, as well as some of the disadvantages. For example, I found that although Tanya’s utilization of her own personal narrative and experiences to determine what social justice issues she would address in the classroom raised ethical questions, I was inspired by her ability to create an inclusive classroom environment. I was also inspired by Tanya’s sphere of influence — even if I personally disagreed with her approach and the type of influence exerted. The fact that her students were engaging in rich conversations at home, with their parents, on their own time, suggested to me that perhaps teaching for social justice could empower and inspire students to continue learning and growing.

Disadvantages

While Tanya was achieving her stated goals, she was also imparting her own experiences and understanding of the world on to her students. Was this method of pre-selecting topics and issues for discussion limiting the types of learning experienced by students and silencing other voices? The other two participants in this study opted for a more open-ended approach, allowing for a combination of pre-selected, age-appropriate social justice topics, as well as, alternative lines of inquiry. This approach to social justice allowed for students to engage with a wide-
variety of topics, including those that were of particular interest to the students and may have challenged the teacher’s way of thinking.

Notably, despite an emphasis on integrating elements of social justice within their practice, not a single participant encouraged participation in civic life. Participation in civic life, whether through voting or taking on a leadership role in the community, is a key aspect of the Citizenship Education Framework. An analysis of the data suggests that although each of the participants had equipped their students with various skills and understandings associated with the Citizenship Education Framework, they did not actually teach their students how to apply those skills and understandings within civic life.

Subjectivity in the Classroom

Underpinning the purpose of this paper was a desire to assess the role personal values and beliefs play in determining what social justice issues are addressed in the classroom, and to understand subsequent implications for program development in relation to citizenship education. In other words, what influences teachers’ choice of issues and topics explored in the classroom? The data reveals that subjectivity is not unique to social justice education frameworks. Tanya, Charlotte, and Brenda, all utilized their own knowledge (and lack thereof), experiences, and expectations to shape their approach to citizenship education in the classroom. As noted, only one of these educators self-identified as applying a social justice framework; the other two simply integrated and utilized components of social justice education. As such, it is important to recognize that subjectivity is inherent in every aspect of teaching, regardless of the framework applied. Further, while Tanya did utilize her own passion for social justice to guide her approach to citizenship education, there is no evidence within these interviews to support the notion that social justice education frameworks are particularly exclusionary.
Implications and Recommendations

Through this study, I aim to not only demonstrate how teachers integrate social justice content within the context of citizenship education in the social studies classroom but also how personal values and beliefs determine what issues are addressed (and ignored) in the classroom. As noted, Tanya’s own approach to teaching for social justice ensured that her students interacted with concepts that fell within her “comfort zone”, particularly the politics of identity (Tanya, December 4, 2014). This finding is supported by Mthethwa-Sommers (2013) study involving social justice educators. She determined that social justice educators often choose issues as points of learning and discussion because of their own lived experienced or personal narrative (pp. 225-229). As Tanya self-identified as a social justice educator, one might draw parallels between her practice and the findings in Mthethwa’s study. The implications of this practice are significant when one acknowledges that teachers exert influence over their students’ understandings of self. In other words, teachers who utilize such an approach to teaching for social justice risk shaping their students’ understanding of self so that the values, characteristics, and dispositions espoused by students, align with the teacher’s own political and social beliefs.

All three of the participants involved in this study also advocated – whether explicitly or inadvertently – for students to “take action”. The degree to which students were to engage in taking action varied, but much of the data was steeped in activist-based understandings of citizenship. In essence, students had to go beyond simply knowing about issues of the world, they had to become activists and evoke change. One of the negative implications of this approach is that it leads students to believe that ‘good citizens’ are those who actively seek out opportunities for change. Unfortunately, this continues to pit responsibilities-based versus rights-based understandings of citizenship against one another and does not allow much room for
alternative conceptions of citizenship. Moreover, it downplays the idea that many students may ascribe to multiple identities and have difficulty actively encouraging change.

Based on the results of this study, I can make the following recommendation to others who wish to incorporate aspects of social justice within their citizenship education program: Review the *Citizenship Education Framework* and be sure to note how your approach aligns with those outlined in the curriculum documents. Throughout this study, I discovered that the participants involved did not consult the Citizenship Education Framework. Rather, they relied on their own understandings of citizenship, which appeared informed by a combination of values, knowledge, ignorance, and personal experiences, to develop programming and justify their approaches to citizenship education. Although the approaches to citizenship education described by the participants mainly fell within the framework itself, the curriculum document did not appear to be at the fore of program planning. This was particularly reflected by the absence of civic engagement in the participants’ data. By reviewing the document prior to engaging in citizenship education, teachers can limit some of the bias that they might bring with them to conversation. In addition, the foci of citizenship education programs will then be aligned with Ministry standards, again limiting some of the ambiguity that surrounds the implementation of citizenship education programs.

**Limitations**

The limitations of this study are two-fold. First, the small sample size makes it impossible to generalize the findings of this study. Although there were some similarities among the approaches undertaken by each participant, variances were so significant that it would be inaccurate to apply the findings of this study to other cases. Second, this study was only able to recruit educators from public school boards in Ontario.
Further Study

Some questions that have been raised by the completion of this study, and that could be used as avenues for further research, are:

1. How can we educate teachers to separate their personal values, beliefs, and dispositions from the act of teaching?
2. Should teachers separate their personal values, beliefs, and dispositions from the act of teaching? Is it reasonable to expect a separation of these values, beliefs, and dispositions?
3. Given that subjectivity is inherent in much professional activity, what are the implications for teacher education? How can we prepare teachers to be intentional about their instruction and presentation of material?

Conclusion

This study has been an exercise in navigating competing visions of citizenship, as well as complex theoretical systems relating to conceptions of citizenship, constructions of social identity, and social justice education. Attempts to reconcile the various manifestations of teaching for social justice and social justice education often seemed impossible, particularly given the limitations of this research paper. Ultimately, this study was able to examine three Ontario elementary teachers’ perceptions of citizenship education within the context of ‘teaching for social justice’ and determine how some teachers go about integrating social justice content within their social studies classroom. I gleaned valuable insight into the process through which these teachers integrate social justice content and the similarities among those who utilize social justice elements and those who ‘teach for social justice’. It is important for teachers to keep in mind that they are the ones who determine what issues or topics are discussed in the classroom. By remaining open to student lines of inquiry, we can allow for a range of voices and
understandings to be heard, recognized, and acknowledged. Although these voices and understandings may not be validated, a simple acknowledgement of differences might be enough to create truly inclusive classrooms where all students are respected.
References


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Ontario Ministry of Education. (2013). The Ontario Curriculum – Social Studies Grades 1-6, History and Geography Grades 7 and 8. [Revised].


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 teachers’ perceptions of citizenship education within the context of ‘teaching for social justice’ in the social studies classroom 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. Arlo Kempf. My research supervisor is Dr. Arlo Kempf. 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 a 30 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: Marco Di Giacomo

Phone number: 647-779-2497                      Email: marco.digiacomo@mail.utoronto.ca

Instructor’s Name: __________________________________________
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 Marco Di Giacomo and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described.

Signature: __________________________

Name (printed): ______________________

Date: _______________
Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What does the term *citizenship* mean to you?

2. How do you approach or incorporate citizenship education within your social studies program?

3. How do you integrate social justice education within your classroom practice OR how have you approached social justice topics/issues within your social studies programming?

4. How do you decide what social justice issues to address?

5. How have your experiences as a Social Studies educator influenced the types of social justice issues you choose to address in the classroom?

6. What are some of the strategies you use to assess student learning when teaching a social justice issue?

7. What big ideas do you hope your students walk away with in relation to citizenship education?

8. Are you successful in this regard?

9. Has your school and/or board environment influenced your approach to citizenship education? Follow up: If so, how, and can you provide specific examples?