Sociopolitical Movements and Social Justice Education: Looking at Educators’ Perspectives and Understandings of Sociopolitical Movements and Social Justice Education within School Settings

By

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Abstract

In the recent half of the last century, students have used sociopolitical movements as vehicles to advocate for progressive changes, to contend with governments and institutions, and to participate in political discourses. In North America, the Civil Rights Movement spurred one of the most significant turning points through the *Brown v. Board of Education* case (1954). The victory in court resulted in the abolition of segregated schooling. Recognizing that sociopolitical movements have been able to effect such grand changes in education systems, it is worthwhile to look into what they can do for social justice educators in contemporary times. Through a qualitative case study approach, this research explores two educators’ perspectives on sociopolitical movements and social justice education, and the ways in which they impact school settings. Findings suggest that educators may adopt varying perspectives or understandings of sociopolitical movements and social justice education based on their roles and duties within a school. They also suggest that a contemporary model for social justice education seems to be needed in order to address conceptions that view some political ideologies as sociopolitical movements with agendas that are antithetical to the aims of traditional social justice education.

**Key Words:** Social Justice Education; Sociopolitical Movements; Critical Pedagogy; Educators’ Perspectives; Political Ideology; Neoliberalism.
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Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... 2
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................................ 3

Chapter 1: Introduction .................................................................................................................. 6
  Background and Purpose of the Study .......................................................................................... 6
  Research Topic and Questions ..................................................................................................... 9
  Statement of the Research Problem ............................................................................................. 10
  Significance of the Study ............................................................................................................ 10
  Background of the Researcher ..................................................................................................... 12
  Overview ....................................................................................................................................... 17

Chapter 2: Review of Literature ................................................................................................. 18
  Overview of Chapter 2 ................................................................................................................ 18
  Interpretive Framework: Critical Postmodern Theory ................................................................. 18
  Philosophical Assumption: Axiological ........................................................................................ 21
  What is Social Justice Education? ............................................................................................... 21
  What is a Sociopolitical Movement? ........................................................................................... 23
  Important Developments within the Fields of SJE and SPM ..................................................... 25
  Philosophical Tenants and Historical Backdrop of SJE and SPM ............................................. 25
  Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy ......................................................................... 26
  Character Education ................................................................................................................... 28
  Assimilation and Citizenship Education .................................................................................... 28
  Multicultural Education .............................................................................................................. 29
  Global and Democratic Citizenship Education .......................................................................... 29
  Critical Literacy .......................................................................................................................... 31
  Education Policies and Political Ideologies ............................................................................... 32
  Social Justice Education and Sociopolitical Movements in Canada .......................................... 34
    Multicultural education in Canada ......................................................................................... 34
    The branding, commercialization, and marketization of Canadian schools ......................... 36
  Influence of policies and political ideologies on Canadian education systems ....................... 38
  Connections between Texts ......................................................................................................... 40

Chapter 3: Methodology .............................................................................................................. 43
  Restatement of Research Topic and Questions ........................................................................ 43
  Procedure .................................................................................................................................... 43
  Instruments of Data Collection ................................................................................................... 43
    Literature review .................................................................................................................... 43
    Interviews ............................................................................................................................. 44
    Interview participants .......................................................................................................... 45
  Data Collection and Analysis ................................................................................................... 46
  Ethical Review Procedures ......................................................................................................... 47
  Limitations of the Research ....................................................................................................... 48
Chapter 4: Findings .................................................................................................................. 50
Overview of Findings .................................................................................................................. 50
Research Site: Cardinal Wing Secondary School ........................................................................ 50
Coding Chart 1: Identifying Codes .............................................................................................. 55
Coding Chart 2: Significant Passages ......................................................................................... 58
Coding Chart 3: Code Sets ......................................................................................................... 62
Coding Chart 4: Overarching Themes ......................................................................................... 66
Coding Chart 5 ............................................................................................................................ 72
Summary of Findings ................................................................................................................ 74

Chapter 5: Discussion .................................................................................................................. 76
Overview of Discussion ............................................................................................................... 76
Political Ideologies as Sociopolitical Movements ...................................................................... 76
Trends of Standardization and Accountability ........................................................................... 77
International Marketization of Education .................................................................................. 77
Sociopolitical Movements and Contemporary Social Justice Education .................................... 78
Implications ................................................................................................................................. 79
Recommendations for Future Study ......................................................................................... 79
Conclusion .................................................................................................................................. 80

References .................................................................................................................................... 82

Appendices ................................................................................................................................... 90
Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interview ............................................................................. 90
Appendix B: Consent Form for Interview .................................................................................. 91
Appendix C: Georgia Rose Interview Questions ......................................................................... 92
Appendix D: Michael Trent Interview Questions ....................................................................... 95
Chapter 1: Introduction

Background and Purpose of the Study

I entered the Master of Teaching program with the intent to research the impact that educational streaming, also known as tracking, has on students. I came to that motive through thorough reflections and dialogues with colleagues, family members, friends and guidance counsellors. More specifically, I wanted to look at students’ abilities to exercise self-efficacy in educational institutions, especially when it comes to choosing between the different levels of “academic rigour” and understanding how streaming can determine and skew one’s trajectory in life. While I did not end up researching educational streaming, I did focus on an area that has strong ties with the educational institutions and ways in which students engage with them.

There are three events that have taken place during my first year in my teacher education program that have helped to refine and finalize the scope of this research project. The first is as follows. During my first year in my teacher’s education program I had taken part in a series of professional development workshops that were focused on incorporating social justice education (SJE) into teaching practices. As many conversations pertaining to race, oppression, and privilege do, the discussions that took place were contentious and discomforting. Opinions and perspectives butted against one another, creating an atmosphere filled with disconcertedness and adversity. The point that I would like to really focus on in this introduction comes from a statement made by the facilitator of this workshop. As a way of introducing participants in the workshop to the breadth of SJE, the facilitator listed various related ideas and fields of work that it embodies, many of which were lofty subjects in and of themselves. One of the subjects listed was sociopolitical movements (SPM). I was immediately intrigued and inspired to explore how sociopolitical movements might be impacting urban school systems in the Greater Toronto Area.
(GTA). Upon further inspection, I found this avenue to be broad enough for me to explore without feeling inhibited by the time constraints of my program, while also being narrow enough for me to adequately address it in my research.

The second event that contributed to the aims of this research project occurred during one of my first year classes. At the risk of oversimplifying a complex subject, the professor used an analogy to eloquently describe the political atmosphere of teaching. The professor stated that teaching is one of the few professions, where the practitioner meets with all or a majority of their clients at the same time. That is, unless special circumstances are made, teachers must cater to the needs of each student while under the purview of every other student, and occasionally, other staff, administrators and guardians. Each client, particularly the students, are entitled to expect that their personal needs will be met. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the teacher to see that these needs are met, but not at the expense of others. Add to this discourse the various factors that impact one’s wellbeing, such as race, language and socioeconomic status just to name a few, and it becomes quite apparent how addressing the various needs in a school setting can be overwhelming and problematic. It seems as though there are essentially too many stakeholders in a school setting for the teaching profession to not be politically charged; however, as findings from the research has shown, particularly with the interview participants, it is interesting to see the different perspectives that educators can take up on this topic.

My experience at the social justice workshop piqued my interests in this area and established the foundation for this research project. The event that took place in my class caused me to think about how individuals in school settings are inextricably, and often unconsciously involved in political discourses within educational settings. The third and final event that I will outline significantly impacted the ways in which I perceived the relationship between SJE and
Sociopolitical Movements and Social Justice Education

SPMs, and how the two phenomena actually manifest in a school setting. It took place during one of my teaching placements. I was having a discussion about the Ontario teachers’ unions with my associate teacher (AT). There was one comment in particular that my AT made that stood out the most. Quite simply, they stated that teaching is inherently a politically charged profession. In light of the second noted influential event for this research project, what my AT said was not entirely new to me. However, there were two new insights that had been percolating in my mind that served as bridges to new ideas when my AT had said this. The first being my newly adopted and undeveloped research topic: SJE and SPMs. The second pertained to a newly acquired perspective I had for teaching, largely due to the fact that it had been my first time teaching in a secondary school. From that moment onwards, I observed how the idea of teaching being politically charged manifested within an actual school setting: how teachers chose to share their perspectives in staff meetings; the involvement or lack thereof from educators in student groups; the dialogue that occurs when corporate interests intersect with educational needs at professional development workshops. It seemed as if there was always a deliberate and implicit agenda to each and every action an educator took. As a result, I became curious about how SPMs impacted the implicit and explicit motives of educators.

Alongside the backdrop of my personal background and experiences—which will be articulated later in this chapter—it is the compilation of these three occurrences that provided direction at the onset of this research project. Of course there were other forces that contributed to the refinement of this research project, but they would be flushed out only after the initial trajectory had been set.
Research Topic and Questions

This study looks at: an educator’s understanding of sociopolitical movements and social justice education; educational settings; and teaching practices. The overarching and primary research question guiding this project is as follows: *How do two educators with different roles in the same school perceive the effects that sociopolitical movements and social justice education have on school settings?* In addition to the primary research question there are two sub-questions. 1) *What kind of understandings do educators have of social justice education?* 2) *In what ways can an educator utilize sociopolitical movements to positively benefit their practice?*

Through the lens of these questions I sought to develop a more complex understanding of the relationship between SJE and SPMs as well as to develop a useful catalogue of techniques and insights that an educator may utilize to deal with the increasingly diversified and politicized atmosphere of a twenty-first century urban classroom, with particular attention paid to the GTA.

To describe the research in a broad sense, the questions and topics raised in this project are intended to develop a more thorough and complex understanding of educational settings and their sociopolitical surroundings. For the purpose of this research, when I speak of educational settings, I am referring to the bureaucratic and systematic structure of a school, any or all of its classrooms, as well as the teaching and learning experiences of their immediate members (i.e. students, teachers, extra-curricular and resource educators and administration). Essentially, this research seeks to gain a better understanding of how educational settings are impacted by SPMs. An SPM will refer to the coalescing of people or organizations in response to social angsts or injustices for the sake of supporting, altering, or putting forth particular political agendas. The research sought to analyze the relationship between educational settings and sociopolitical movements in the context of North American educational markets. Findings are contextualized
against urban schools in Canada, with particular attention, reference, and generalizations made to the GTA.

Specific examples include looking at SPMS such as Civil Rights and national ideologies such as liberalism and conservatism, and how they impact the internal atmosphere of school systems with regards to student organizations such as Black History Awareness Committees, Gay Straight Alliances and/or Student Councils. In addition to looking at how student societies are impacted, attention is given to the ways in which teachers perceive the effects of SPMs.

Statement of the Research Problem

In a time where a students’ involvement in and understanding of SPMs increasingly influence their perceptions of the world and their wellbeing (Diemer, Hsieh, & Pan, 2009), this research sought to identify ways for enhancing student self-efficacy through an educator’s practice of SJE. The notion of self-efficacy noted here pertains to a student’s capacity to be cognizant of: their development as informed global citizens; their susceptibility to social influences; and the viable life paths and career options that are available to them. As demonstrated by one of the research participants in this study, to practice and understand SJE are two distinct concepts. They would often explain the attempts they would make to enlighten their students on the notions of power and privilege, but would experience difficulty when asked to elaborate on specific SJE techniques or what it meant to be a SJE practitioner. Thus, this research also aims to identify and analyze an educator’s articulation of their own SJE practices in addition to how they perceive the effects that SPMs impact their educational settings.

Significance of the Study

Since the introduction of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1985, the concept of multiculturalism and its role in Canada has been under constant scrutiny. Some authors maintain
moderate optimism, or at the very least a stance of neutrality, that multiculturalism may give way
to a myriad of social and economic opportunities and cultural mingling (Banting & Kymlicka,
2010; Driedger, 2011). Others denounce it for being superficial and assimilative (Bissoondath,
2002; Frost, 2011). What neither side denies is the existence of cultural tensions and barriers.
Essentially, issues pertaining to culture, ethnicity, and race are far from being settled in Canada,
and require innovative analyses in order to best approach even a modest resolution.

Countless North American schools have inherited remnants of historical transgressions—for
example, segregation—and have now become systematically imbued with cultural tensions
(Banks, 2011). This is seen in cases in which schools operate under ethnocentric assumptions by
which the standards of success are determined by assessing a student’s ability to engage with
Eurocentric canons of literature and to perform on standardized tests without adequately
accommodating them for their various needs.

Looking particularly at the Ontario Ministry of Education, one will find that curriculum
guidelines and policies highlight the necessity to cater to the needs of all students. It is explicitly
outlined in Part VI (Boards), Duties and Powers, Section 169.1 (1) a. 1, of the Ontario Education
Act, that all boards must

promote a positive school climate that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils, including
pupils of any race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex,
sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or
disability. (Education Act, 1990)

To be inclusive and accepting entails creating multiple opportunities for success, but more
importantly, it requires that educators meet students at their level of academic and cultural
awareness. Though significant progress has been made to alter traditional teaching pedagogies,
school systems continue to churn marginalized students through a demoralizing educational experience. It is often the students that do not fit mainstream identity markers and ideologies—that is White, middleclass, heterosexual males—that lack the resources they need to succeed (Venzant Chambers & McCready, 2011). A valuable asset to build resiliency for marginalized students in this circumstance is self-efficacy (Mihyeon, 2014). Educators can help students to develop self-efficacy by not only building awareness of anti-oppressive systems, but also increasing students’ critical global citizenship engagement through SJE practices. Educators and researchers have since developed various techniques for dealing with culturally, racially, and ethnically related educational tensions. One of the most prominent developments has been culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy. Culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy (CRRP) seeks to align students’ cultural, ethnic and linguistic identities with that of the learning environment, with particular emphasis on the modification of teaching strategies and resources (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009). However, scholars such as Kumashiro (2002) have highlighted that even with a critical pedagogy, educators must be wary of assumptions that they are susceptible to carrying when dealing with anti-oppressive practices.

This research intends to help teachers identify the features of SPMs that create systematic and institutional pressures that impose on classroom activities. Furthermore, it provides tools and techniques for negotiating with the inevitable sociopolitical influences that transcend schools and their surroundings.

**Background of the Researcher**

We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time. (Eliot, 1944)

I first read this stanza in a textbook in an undergraduate math course. I did not understand the math so fluently, but I almost immediately latched onto the meaning of this T.S. Elliot passage. In four lines, Elliot successfully articulated my experience as an aspiring educator. A former manager of mine once told me that the journey is the destination. Or in other words, one’s ultimate objective should not be to arrive somewhere, but rather to appreciate and prolong the process. Elliot’s stanza built on this idea by adding that even when one does arrive, they should do so with fresh perspectives so that even on familiar turfs they can unearth new insights.

New learning gives way to new perspectives: this is how I feel about my memories. I have come to understand my reflections as being veiled with layers of experiential understanding. The reflections I had of my elementary school experiences approximately seven years ago would have only been filtered through the lens of my secondary school experiences. However, four years after that my secondary and post-secondary schooling experiences would have served as additional lenses for reflecting on my elementary experiences. Two years later yet again, my perceptions of my elementary school experiences are readjusted by the lens of my graduate school experience. Of course there are many other experiential lenses that can be considered as influential, but for the purposes of this study I have chosen to focus largely on my experiences within educational school settings.

The notion of exploration as described by Elliot is relevant to this research project because it describes one of the most important aspects of critical pedagogy: reflection. In order to grapple with anti-oppressive systems it is imperative for individuals to reflect on their personal and lived experiences with it. When an individual is in fact able to develop an understanding of
how power and privilege operate on a personal scale, then the opportunities to move towards greater theoretical generalizations, and ultimately resolutions, are enhanced. I looked back on my experiences within various school settings with new insights to not simply discover the multiple identities of privilege and power that I possessed, but to also understand the ways I chose to manage those identities.

There is a story from when I was in the eleventh grade that I shall never forget. Sports had a wide support from students, teachers, and administrators, and as a result played a significant role in shaping my high school’s culture. Shawn was a friend of mine who had moved to Toronto from the United States. Between the summer of the grade ten and eleven school years he was recruited to play for our basketball team. Shawn and I became good friends because of the ample time we had spent together on and off the court. We were both in the same design technology class, taught by a teacher that was an assistant coach for our basketball team. One day Shawn and I strolled in late for class after lunch. As we shared a laugh I walked in ahead of Shawn and proceeded directly to a computer. Perhaps Shawn might have disrupted the class slightly more than I did with his talking or laughing. I do not remember. However, I do remember the teacher becoming upset with Shawn and asking him to leave the class because of his tardiness. Shawn replied by saying something along lines of: but Marlon was late too! But the teacher did not address me. In fact, I had never had any conflicts with this teacher. He continued to coerce Shawn down to the office, and after successfully doing so, carried on with the rest of the class. No comment or gesture was made towards me.

I remember my initial reaction. I thought it was strange that we would receive different responses for the same infraction. But I was not too concerned. I joked about it with some of my peers. I had even approached Shawn after school, laughing and joking about the incident. He had
laughed it off too. Looking at the incident four years later, near the end of my undergraduate program, I began to experience some concern. I began to question why things unfolded the way they did. I compared the circumstances of Shawn and I. I could not help but think that our perceived identities and academic trajectories contributed to the scenario. We were both a part of a basketball team composed of approximately twenty males, with approximately 80% of us being Black and having educational backgrounds (i.e. college/applied level courses and/or with low grades) that would eventually end up constricting many of our post-secondary aspirations. I believed that my involvement in extra-curricular activities and academic achievements—in comparison with that of the majority of my teammates—set me apart as an outlier and ultimately contributed to the positive perceptions that teacher’s had of me. Black students in general, not just those on the basketball team, were seen as: not being concerned with educational progression; not being academically inclined; or even being socially contentious with teachers and peers.

Two years later while I was training to become an educator, I gained new insights on this moment. Understanding that teachers are compilations of their beliefs, attitudes, and experiences, I see my grade eleven teacher’s response as one sparked by an innumerable amount of influences. He was a White heterosexual male who was constantly bombarded with stereotypes depicting marginalized youth as unmotivated and unengaged while simultaneously managing the professional and political loads that come with being a teacher in the public sphere just to name a few. With that being said I have chosen to describe his response as misguided concern. As a marginalized youth that disconfirmed some of the above noted stereotypes I arose as an outlier. It appeared to me that because I was an outlier my teacher perceived me as unique and delicate, and so for the sake of not jeopardizing my circumstantial unprecedented mannerisms, he chose to
excuse my behaviour. When it came to Shawn on the other hand, the teacher perceived there to be less risk with enforcing a consequence for his behaviour because Shawn did not consistently excel academically, nor did he maintain a desirable teacher-student relationship. There was an easily adoptable and dangerous presumption that Shawn had little to lose from being absent from class because there was little he had accumulated while being present. I on the other hand, had much to lose because I had already been excelling academically. There was misguided concern in the sense that, the teacher should have been more compassionate with Shawn’s circumstance. All visible signs indicated that he had more needs, and that it probably would have been less detrimental to keep him in class as opposed to reaffirming that in the teacher’s mind, in Shawn’s mind, in my mind, and in everyone’s mind, that Shawn had nothing to gain from being in class, and nothing to lose from leaving.

My intention here was not to engage in an in depth analysis of my educational experiences and background, but rather to highlight how my understanding of my educational background has evolved and shaped my concern with issues of equity and social justice in schooling. I have looked at my lived experiences in school systems time and time again, and quite often I have seen them differently. The differences in my perceptions are largely due to my increasing awareness of new evidence, clues, and facts, all of which alter the context of my reflections. The changes in my reflections amount to insightful inquires. Slowly I develop a more cohesive representation of an occasion, not simply recalling the who, what, when and where, but also addressing why and how. The meanings I discover often land me in terrains that are not so easily discerned in the immediate context of my reflection. That is, the teacher’s unconscious transgression against Shawn was not a result limited to the accumulation of their interactions
with one another, but rather a response birthed in the contentious matrimony of personal, professional, and political strife.

**Overview**

Chapter 1 serves as the introduction for this research project. In it I discuss the purpose of the study, the research topic and questions and the significance of the study. To conclude the chapter I briefly discuss my background and how it has motivated me to be involved in this topic and study. Chapter 2 begins with a brief explanation of the interpretive framework and the philosophical assumption that I have adopted as a guide for this research project. This is followed by a review of the literature in the fields of SJE and SPMs. Some of the key concepts that are covered in this chapter include multicultural education (Gérin-Lajoie, 2011), culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009), and critical literacy (Banks, 1991). Chapter 3 provides an outline of the methodology and procedures used in this study. This includes a breakdown of: the data collection instruments (i.e. a description of the interview participants); the data collection and analysis; the ethical review procedures; and the limitations of the research. Chapter 4 is dedicated to the findings of the study, and describes the data provided by the participants in the context of addressing the research topic and questions. Lastly, in chapter 5 I discuss conclusions and inferences through drawing connections between the review of literature (i.e. chapter 2) and the collected data (i.e. chapter 4). I also identify the limitations of the study, recommendations for social justice educators, and suggested readings and directions for further research.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Overview of Chapter 2

I begin this chapter by outlining my interpretive framework and philosophical assumption. I made a conscious effort to do this because they play a significant role in informing this research project. I also felt that acknowledging and making explicit certain biases and assumptions helped to provide more clarity as I engaged with the myriad of interrelated topics throughout this report. After the breakdown of the interpretive framework and philosophical assumption I delve into the review of literature. The review of literature is guided by a brief review of two main topics: social justice education (SJE) and sociopolitical movements (SPMs). Various subtopics are subsequently explored under these two umbrella terms. The chapter concludes by looking at how the identified areas relate to one another within the context of Canadian educational settings.

Interpretive Framework: Critical Postmodern Theory

The interpretive framework that informs this research project is critical postmodern theory (CPT). CPT proved to be an effective lens for analyzing the numerous facets and conflicting descriptions implicated in this research project. Though features from multiple frameworks are incorporated, there are two distinct theoretical frameworks that CPT ties together: critical theory and postmodern theory. Ben Agger (1991) provides a succinct backdrop to the two main frameworks that makeup CPT. He states that critical theory has its roots in the works of the Frankfurt School theorists and that it is concerned with the emergence and analysis of Karl Marx’s critique of capitalism. Furthermore, it seeks to reform society by redressing the deeply rooted beliefs it holds that allow certain groups to exploit others on political, social, and economic levels. Postmodern theory, as Agger (1991) explains, is
considerate of gender, race, culture and many other views, but is also opposed to any sort of totalizing assertion put forth by any of them. Postmodern theory’s rejection of metanarratives minimizes risks associated with generalizations and emphasizes the importance of factoring in the contexts associated with a particular circumstance.

As John W. Creswell (2013) alludes to, postmodern theory remains relevant through being sensitive to current social and cultural needs. It is this same feature that allows postmodern theory and critical theory the opportunity to synch. While postmodern theory rejects the totalising view that society operates under irrational and unjust orders, it cannot deny the eminent need for social reformation. That is, the current state of affairs is one that has various populations entrenched in perpetual oppression from which they must be liberated. At the least, postmodern theory should respond to the totalizing ideas imposed by the neoliberal and capitalistic state (Creswell, 2013).

In some senses, CPT can be seen as a coalition of various theoretical frameworks. Andre P. Grace (1997) defines CPT in greater detail with a concise relay of a CPT typology first offered by Henry Giroux (1992). He explains how CPT borrows components from modernism, postmodernism, feminism and postcolonialism to come up with a framework that is flexible, reformative, culturally responsive, politically astute, and concerned with the historical implications of power and privilege (Grace, 1997). In addition, Grace defines CPT effectively in saying that it is

an emerging theoretical scaffolding that moves beyond intellectual jousting to confront the meaning and value of competing theoretical discourses for contemporary educational practice. It interrogates presences and absences in these discourses and addresses an important question: How might theoretical discourses intersect to create a broader, more
inclusionary framework for social and cultural analysis?... It values a analogical encounter involving modern, postmodern, feminist, and postcolonial discourses as a means to invigorate life, learning, work, and their prospects in contemporary times. (1997, p. 55)

CPT can be seen as a theory of progressive possibilities. Progressive possibilities in the sense that it attempts to utilize the overlays and gaps in and between multiple social theories in order to create an active and contemporary lens for social justice. Rather than serving as a tool to prescribe techniques, CPT seeks to develop resolutions on a case-by-case basis.

There are inherent challenges with CPT because of the various components from which it is comprised. Scholars criticize CPT as an attempt at fusing theories with fundamental contradictions (Agger, Critical theory, poststructuralism, postmodernism: Their sociological relevance, 1991; Giroux, 1992; Grace, 1997; Stinson & Bullock, 2012). For example, postmodern theory contradicts all other theories because it rejects any sort of metanarrative or totalizing conception of the state of society—regardless of whether that assumption is critical of prejudice, oppression, or discrimination—while postcolonial theory consistently maintains views that systemic racist barriers permeate current societal trends. It can also be argued that CPT diminishes the intended emphasis that the various theoretical frameworks instill in their respective areas of focus. However, because CPT capitalizes on the tensions and gaps that form between various frameworks it does not mean that it should be viewed and belittled as an inconsiderate blend of various concepts. Even though CPT does in fact share various characteristics with other theoretical frameworks, a feature that sets it apart is that it is ever active and current, placing precedence in the matter of forming new and inclusive agendas.
Philosophical Assumption: Axiological

This research project was conducted using an axiological philosophical assumption. The axiological assumption maintains that all qualitative research is value-laden. The researcher undergoes the process of acknowledging values by explicitly outlining their own beliefs, as well as the biases within the information gathered from texts and participants (Creswell, 2013). Using the axiological view allowed me to probe my suspicions and make inferences about the hidden inspirations and ulterior motives of research participants and authors from the literature review. It also allows the reader to achieve a better interpretation of the readers thought processes and rationales.

What is Social Justice Education?

The term social justice education (SJE) and what it implies can also be referred to as teaching for social justice, or just simply social justice. In addition, scholars can be seen as implicitly or explicitly advocating for the importance of SJE by focusing on particular strands of work such as multicultural education, culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy or by even looking at the commercialization and marketization of education (Banks J., 2008; Gay, 2010; Gidney & Gidney, 2008; Johnstone & Lee, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Ultimately, the many areas in which scholars place their focus often leads to the usage of SJE as an umbrella term to describe policies, research, or pedagogies geared towards spurring anti-oppressive and action-oriented agendas, and/or increasing equal access to resources for all members in a society. Even though SJE receives noteworthy attention throughout various bodies of work, it is less frequent that a scholar would provide an explicit and concise description for what SJE is. Fortunately, Laura E. Pinto, et al. (2012) have highlighted key tenants of SJE in order to develop a detailed description of it, which can arguably also serve as a definition. They note that SJE can be
described as “a form of empowerment” that overtly addresses “issues of equity,” provides a “theoretical account of oppression and privilege,” and offers “practical strategies for changing social institutions” and systems (Pinto, et al., 2012, p. 3). This definition contradicts some contemporary notions of the purpose of education. That is, instead of purporting to prepare students to compete in a global economy driven by financial motivators (Pinto, 2013), SJE aims to develop thoughtful reformers.

Most of the research on SJE is situated in the context of the United States. Scholars often begin with an analysis on the disparities found in the academic achievement gaps within schools across the United States. Additionally, authors tend to analyze the trends in the disparities of the achievement gap against the backdrop of race, culture, and/or ethnicity (Gay, 2003; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Much of this work is achieved through the lens of Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP). CRRP will be addressed in more detail in a subsequent section of this chapter; however, it is worthwhile to note that one of the key features of CRRP is to—with a particular emphasis on race and culture—incorporate students’ lives and identities within the curriculum. Michael Apple (2007) notes that an authentic analysis on the historical development and implications of educational policies in the U.S. cannot be achieved without taking into consideration the role of race. Whether scholars choose to focus on educational policies, teacher education, or the actual teaching practice, it is evident that race relations and ethnocentrism continues to be a prominent source of angst in U.S. societies, particularly within schools. As a result, SJE is often a means for upholding a higher standard of practice for teachers and learners while simultaneously working towards eradicating inequitable ideologies in educational institutions.
What is a Sociopolitical Movement?

While SJE functions more as an independent variable in this research study, the topic of sociopolitical movements (SPMs) serves more as a dependent variable. In other words, the primary goal of this project was not so much about obtaining a comprehensive understanding of SPMs in and of themselves as much as it was about considering and exploring the ways they impacted what it meant to teach for social justice. As such, a separate study is required in order to attain a more complete understanding of SPMs. I did, however, include interpretations of SPMs as far as they helped to reach the goals of this research project.

There are a number of terms that are often swapped in place of sociopolitical movements, but still they for the most part pertain to the same subject. Such terms include, but are not limited to: social political movements, social movements, sociopolitical change and sociopolitical development. For this study I will use the term sociopolitical movement (SPM).

When it comes to SPMs researchers and theorists tend to focus on theoretical frameworks for understanding the complexities of their social and political facets (Edelman, 2001; McCarthy & Zald, 1973). Consequently, a clear and concise definition of an SPM is often left out of the analyses. When scholars do provide a definition there is often variances in their accounts (Burstein, 1999). For example, McCarthy and Zald define an SPM as “a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society” (1977, pp. 1217-18). Though concise, Burstein (1999) criticizes it for being too broad and not doing enough to distinguish SPMs from other entities like interest groups or political parties. Amenta and Young state that an SPM is “the amassing of resources by challengers to engage in “collective action”—action intended to gain benefits from which members of the intended beneficiary group cannot be readily excluded.
They also explain what is meant by challengers: “politically disadvantaged groups engaged in sustained collective action to secure their claims” (1999, pp. 154-55). This definition succeeds in not being too overly inclusive, but still does not distinguish SPMs from interest groups or political parties. However, this may be for good reasons. Some scholars note that SPMs can and do in fact include interests groups and political parties their ideologies. There are even suggestions that a social movement does not have to be progressive—or in other words, is does not have to be in favour of reducing oppression, and may even promote inequitable or retrogressive ideas—for it to count as an SPM (Apple, 2006; Kumashiro, 2008; Pinto, 2013). In light of the various interpretations of what an SPM is, for this research project it will be defined as individuals, groups, or organizations mobilizing their collective resources and coalescing around achieving common and clearly defined objectives on a political scale in response to social and systematic angsts, oppression, contentions between belief values or neglect.

There were a number of studies that identified changes of trends in the nature of SPMs in North America beginning just after the end of the Second World War and that are still taking effect today (Clément, 2009; Masquelier, 2013). James A. Banks (1985) identified a connection between SJE and SPM in the seams of these changes. He calls them ethnic revitalization movements. Ethnic revitalization movements stem from the 1960s Civil Rights Movements. They were the result of increased awareness of flaws in democratic processes as they pertained to societal realities of systematic oppression with a particular emphasis on race relations. According to Banks, the role of educational institutions within ethnic revitalization movements is to foster an understanding of which stage society is at within the the ethnic revitalization process with the aim of progressing to the next stage. Meaning, the role of each school generation is to carry-on with the process of critiquing and transforming society into a truly democratic and
equitable state. The way ethnic revitalization is described here fits with with a key component of what it means to teach for social justice: critical literacy. Developing critical literacy entails encouraging thoughtful reformations of society. While critical literacy will be explored in greater detail later in this chapter, it is important to note that it refers to the promotion of questioning the presentation of knowledge, missing knowledge, knowledge producers, and knowledge itself (Banks J. A., 2003; Comber, 2015).

**Important Developments within the Fields of SJE and SPM**

One way to view the relationship between SJE and SPM is to understand them as compilations of distinct political and social theories. Contrary to the ways in which SJE and SPM have been outlined thus far, it is in fact difficult, and potentially counterproductive—especially in relation to this research project—to frame the two concepts as mutually exclusive ideas. Schools are often the focus of national political agendas. The No Child Left Behind Act in the United States is arguably the most prominent example of such a scenario. Similarly, some of the most popular and recent social revolutions began with students taking a stance on complex issues. One needs only to think of the 1960s Black southern student sit-in movements (Morris, 1981). This act of student protest was one of many in its time that occurred across various continents. The two fields of work, SJE and SPM, have a long and interconnected history.

**Philosophical Tenants and Historical Backdrop of SJE and SPM**

Modern interpretations of social justice and social movements began to take shape in the works of 19th century theorists and philosophers. With the release of *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1998), Karl Marx and Frederick Engels set the foundation for what would become known as Marxism. At the risk of providing an oversimplified definition, Marxism is a critical worldview that views capitalistic societies as being plagued with conflicts and oppression
that arise from class relations, and as a result, is concerned with the transformation of society. Socialism, which is often conflated with Marxism, is rooted in economic discourses, and is most often interpreted as a system defined by social ownership of the production of resources as well as social stakes in the management of the economy. By encouraging large populations of people to consider the importance of equality in resource production and ownership, Marx and Engels contributed to the popularization of justice on a societal scale.

Philosopher John Stuart Mill also contributed to the development of justice in his work, *Utilitarianism*. To expand on the utilitarian maxim that suggests all people have a desire to be happy, Mill states that “[a]ll persons are deemed to have a right to equality of treatment, except when some recognized social expediency requires the reverse” (1957, p. 93). Mill’s ideas show glimmers of socialist attributes in their advocacy of active co-operative—or social—assistance. In the ideas of both Marx and Mill, moral obligations to decrease oppression and increase assistance are explicitly put forth.

**Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy**

As Jaqueline Irvine clearly articulates, “*culturally relevant [or responsive] pedagogy* is a term that describes effective teaching in culturally diverse classrooms” (2010, p. 57). They are theoretical frameworks for reforming teaching to better address the cultural diversity within school settings. The two terms are often used interchangeably. An adequate discussion on SJE cannot be achieved without reference to CRRP. CRRP began to really take shape in the 1980s and 1990s. At a time when proposals for the reformation of teacher education programs were being put forth to better address the diversity within U.S. societies, Ladson-Billings (1995) sought to expound on the idea of culturally relevant pedagogy as a reformation of teaching itself. She goes on to identify how many scholars had been noting the value of cultural
relevance in education through their emphases on various important aspects of learning. However, the problem as she notes, is that up until that time many scholars had not succeeded in coming up with an approach that was holistic and adequate for addressing the needs of African American students in the United States, and furthermore, that no concise comprehension of such a pedagogy had been created. Ladson-Billings would eventually end up pulling together key components from various scholars’ works to create an effective and contemporary articulation of culturally relevant pedagogy. She attributes a major component of her conception of culturally relevant pedagogy to the work of Jacqueline Jordan’s *Black Students and School Failure* (1990). Ladson-Billings states

Irvine (1990) developed the concept of *cultural synchronization* to describe the necessary interpersonal context that must exist between the teacher and African-American students to maximize learning… [Her] work on African-American students and school failure considers both micro- and macro-analyses, including: teacher-student interpersonal contexts, teacher and student expectations, institutional contexts, and the societal context… This work is important for its break with the cultural deficit or cultural disadvantage explanations which led to compensatory educational interventions. A next step for positing effective pedagogical practice is a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate. I term this pedagogy, *culturally relevant pedagogy*. (Ladson-Billings, 1995, pp. 468-9; emphases are from original document)

This explanation of culturally relevant pedagogy ties together many complex ideas, and conveys them in a clear and concise manner. One may broadly view this pedagogy as a method that views the classroom as a compilation of equally relevant cultures, and that all students
should have an equal stake in wielding their cultures for the sake of developing the classroom’s overall culture. CRRP does not stop there. It changes discourses on student success and achievement gaps by acknowledging and acting on the premise that student success is not merely a meritocratic process by which all students have equal chances at success based on their work ethic, but that a student’s performance in the classroom is also a result of much larger systematic pressures (Ladson-Billings, 2007).

**Character Education**

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, authors highlight what it means to teach for social justice by focusing on particular fields of work. Character education is a branch within social justice education that also has subcategories of its own. As Sue Winton simply states, “[c]haracter education is the explicit effort by schools to teach values to students” (2010). The formal teaching of character education in Ontario has been mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Education since the introduction of *Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools, K–12* (2006). Character education also has its own subcategories. The next three sections of this chapter will look at three of the more popular forms of character education: assimilation and/or citizenship education, and global and democratic citizenship education. These areas have many overlaps, and quite often, addressing one will ultimately lead to the fulfillment or enlightenment of another, but they are not one in the same.

**Assimilation and Citizenship Education**

Citizenship education seeks to inculcate students with views of stewardship, informed participation, and positive attitudes towards other members of society as well as towards the nation state. Citizenship education in North America arose out of assimilationist discourse. Students were taught glorified versions of the nation’s history with cultural transgressions being
omitted or superficially addressed (Banks J. A., 2011; Banks J. A., 2012). A raw example of Canadian assimilationist citizenship education can be seen in the malicious residential schooling system that had plagued First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities for over a century (Green, 2012; Hare & Pidgeon, 2011).

**Multicultural Education**

Multicultural education arose as an attempt to amend the lapses and shortcomings of early citizenship education. One of the greatest catalysts in this transition in the U.S. context was the *Brown v. Board of Education* case. In 1954, the United States Supreme Court made the revolutionary decision of declaring the segregation of state-funded public institutions as unconstitutional (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954). The atmosphere of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s highlighted the necessity for new approaches to educational practices and policies. Similarly, *Brown v. Board of Education* served as a symbolic reference of hope, success, and progression for marginalized groups of people, not just in North America, but across the world. This is the same phenomenon highlighted earlier in this chapter by James A. Banks (1985) in *Ethnic Revitalization Movements and Education*. Geneva Gay (2004) describes multicultural education as a mode of transforming teaching practices, policies, and curricular content in ways that truly reflect and integrate the ethnic, cultural, social, and racial diversity within North American societies.

**Global and Democratic Citizenship Education**

Nearing the turn of the twenty-first century North American education systems began to move beyond policies and practices aimed at developing thoughtful national citizens by focusing on developing global citizens. In addition to the fundamental principles of multicultural education, global citizenship education seeks to encourage student stewardship and activism on a global scale. Furthermore, while multicultural education responds to changing immigration patterns in North America, global citizenship education responds to changing economic and
relation patterns in the world. In North America global citizenship education has strong connections with another form of character education: democratic citizenship education. As the label might suggest, democratic citizenship education uses democracy as both an instrument for instruction, and an educational goal. Students are taught values such as respect, equality, justice and self-determination. As mentioned previously, there are many overlaps between the various forms of character education. As such, it is not difficult to perceive how the notions of global citizenship education and multicultural education can become conflated with or complicated by the interwoven ideology of democracy or democratic citizenship education. When this happens, some of the tenants of the respective character education forms may not be upheld, or some are given more precedence than others. In the case of North America, scholars argue that the pressures of democracy and globalization override those of social justice when it comes to character education, and that students are more explicitly taught to be global competitors in the world economy as opposed to critiquing and reforming global injustices (Andreotti, 2006; Banks J. A., 2003; Banks J. A., 2012; Gérin-Lajoie, 2011; Johnstone & Lee, 2014; Pinto, et al., 2012).

Similar to the ways in which he describes the ethnic revitalization movements, Banks (2008) outlines a tension between national agendas of states and the lived realities of individuals when it comes to teaching democratic and global citizenship. He notes that before students can embody a sense of global citizenship they must first experience it in their personal lives. The idea here is that the fulfilment of global citizenship requires a certain capacity for empathy and perspective sharing, and that students cannot aspire for this state of being while they are being subjected to a lack of fulfilment in their personal experiences with democracy and citizenship in their own nations.
Banks provides what he calls the Stages of Cultural Identity Typology, a six-stage chart that maps out the stages that students must pass through before they can reach a state of true global citizenship (2008). Outlined in the first three stages of this chart are the processes of internalizing and dispelling negative stereotypes, followed by the discovery of new aspects of one’s culture, and then the clarification of their culture. It is not until these stages are crossed, claims Banks, that marginalized and minority students will be able to develop a global citizen mindset.

**Critical Literacy**

Critical literacy is a key component of SJE. Recent trends of high-stakes testing often define literacy as a foundational comprehension of skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Critical literacy questions and challenges knowledge, knowledge producers, the ulterior motives of knowledge and knowledge producers, and to consider knowledge from diverse cultures. It is a way for uncovering implicit and explicit assumptions about what people believe counts as important and valid knowledge (Appleman, 2009; Christensen, 2009). Like character education, critical literacy can be manifested in various ways. The traits that James A. Banks describes in multicultural literacy clearly show that it is in fact a branch of critical literacy. He states that “[m]ulticultural literacy consists of the skills and ability to identify the creators of knowledge and their interests, to uncover the assumptions of knowledge, to view knowledge from diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives, and to use knowledge to guide action that will create a humane and just world” (2003, p. 18). More recent conceptions of critical literacy go as far as creating opportunities for students to resist and explore alternate constructions of literacy, and to challenge the normalcy of the traditional classroom setting (Comber, 2015).
Critical literacy does not only focus on the student. It involves ongoing and diligent reflections from the teacher about their past, present, and future teaching practices. It is the teacher’s responsibility to select materials and create assessments that allow students to challenge their choices, their privileges, the curriculum, and their society. Rogers, et al. (2005) describe a similar experience in their personal learning community. They stated that as teachers, they would “strive to create literate contexts where our students can gain access to what Delpit (1995) refers to as the ‘codes of power,’ a fundamental and unrealized piece of social equity” (Rogers, et al., 2005, p. 348). Accessing codes of power refers to the process of providing students with strategies for entering political discourses, and ultimately empowering them to inspire change.

In *Soft Versus Critical Global Citizenship Education* (2006), Vanessa Andreotti applies critical literacy to the notion of global citizenship education. She critically analyzes what it means to engage in global citizenship education in a western society by questioning the motives and attitudes of the alleged activists. Andreotti highlights that global citizenship education is not just about empowering students so that they can engage in positive stewardship across the world, but to enlighten students about how they may be contributing to those very same disparities that they are so eager to address. It is to consider that global citizenship education is skewed by democratic and North American views, and that not all individuals share the same understanding of what global citizenship education is, or are even given the same opportunities for self-determination.

**Education Policies and Political Ideologies**

The interconnectedness of education and politics is undeniable. In North America school policies, institutions, and practices are regulated by the government. As such, it is hard to
imagine that governments would choose to mandate policies that would not adhere to some sort of implicit or ulterior agendas.

Michael Apple (2006; 2007; 2013), a popular writer in the field of policies and sociopolitical movements in education traces the development of many educational policies in the United States back to the agendas of certain political ideologies. He notes that while ideologies such as conservatism, neoliberalism, progressivism, and republicanism maintain fundamental viewpoints that contradict one another, they have managed to coalesce and agree on key ideas and put forth socially retrogressive national agendas. In bringing up the notion of retrogressive social movements, Apple explains that not all sociopolitical movements encourage progressive and equitable changes. The coalition of the various political ideologies, as Apple explains, have shaped what has come to be known as “right wing” political views. Right wing refers to a belief in favour of returning to traditionally conservative orders of life, many of which are based on exploitation and oppression.

In the Seduction of Common Sense, Kevin K. Kumashiro (2008) raises concerns similar to those that Apple is wary of. Like Apple, Kumashiro also highlights the impact that language has had on the political landscape of education. Take the ideology of neoliberalism as an example. The label neoliberalism in and of itself draws connections to traditional liberal ideologies. One of the key values of traditional liberalism was freedom. Prior to the latter half of the last century, mere freedom was a desired goal for marginalized and oppressed groups across North America. Neoliberalism in the recent half of the century, however, has radicalized the notion of freedom and self-determination to fit the characteristics of democracy and capitalism. The result is that neoliberalism conflates notions of capitalism, self-determination, and freedom, thus presenting to the masses a false alternative to conservatism and neo-conservatism (Apple,
In this case, it is mainly the language of and surrounding the term **freedom** that has been appropriated.

### Social Justice Education and Sociopolitical Movements in Canada

Most of the texts in this literature review are situated in the context of the United States. However, many of the same phenomena can be related to or even identified within Canadian settings. I will briefly explore three key developments in the works relating to SJE and SPMs in Canadian education settings. The first subsection will briefly look at the development of multicultural education in Canada. The second will address the infiltration of branding, commercialization, and marketization in Canadian schools. The third subsection will look at the influence of policies and political ideologies on Canadian education.

**Multicultural education in Canada.**

Multicultural discourse has had a significant impact on Canada’s education systems. Though the terminology may be employed, the Civil Rights and ethnic revitalization movements of the 1950s and 1960s in the United States described by Banks (1985) were also taking place in Canada. Diane Gérin-Lajoie notes that Canadian education systems had been responding to the changing immigration patterns and demographic landscape for at least the past four decades (Gérin-Lajoie, 2011; Gérin-Lajoie, 2012).

As awareness of assimilationist practices, policies, and systems grew in Canada so did tensions between various cultural and ethnic groups. French Canadians felt that they were experiencing significantly less representation as one of the official languages and cultures of the nation as it had been outlined in the original 1867 Constitution Act (Gérin-Lajoie, 2012). Like the original Constitution Act, Indigenous peoples and European settlers had also come to an agreement, but at a much earlier date. In 1613 the two groups engaged in the trading of the Two
Row Wampum Belt, a moment also known as the Indigenous Constitution. This, served to recognize that Aboriginal peoples and European settlers had come to an agreement that they would co-exist in a peaceful and respectful partnership as opposed to a paternalistic one (Muller, 2007). Aboriginals and French Canadians were two of the largest pressures in the 1960s and 1970s for the Canadian government to respond to the evolving ethnic and cultural landscape of the nation. The Canadian government sought to pre-empt potential uproars and to pacify the already erupting views with the introduction of Official Multicultural policies throughout the 1970s and 1980s. However, multiculturalism did not soothe the ethnic and cultural tensions of the nation. Scholars such as Neil Bissoondath criticized multiculturalism for being a policy that undercut equity for equality by neglecting the importance of historical transgressions against particular cultures (2002). Conversely, scholars like George J. Sefa Dei (2011) defends official multiculturalism as a necessary component for being able to place anti-racist and anti-oppressive discourses on the table of discussion in the public and political sphere.

While the term multicultural education is not explicitly used in various Ontario Ministry of Education documents, its sentiments continue to be promoted. The Ontario Curriculum for Grades 11 and 12 English guideline states, for example, that “[a]ntidiscrimination education encourages students to think critically about themselves and others in the world around them in order to promote fairness, healthy relationships, and active, responsible citizenship” It goes on to also state that “[s]chools have the opportunity to ensure that school-community interaction reflects the diversity in the local community and wider society… Families new to Canada, who may be unfamiliar with the Ontario school system, or parents of Aboriginal students may need special outreach and encouragement in order to feel comfortable in their interactions with the school” (2007, p. 33). Even though Official Multiculturalism has been the source of ethnic,
racial, and cultural tensions, it is clear to see that Canada, let alone its education systems, have not given up on as fundamental principle for shaping the nation.

**The branding, commercialization, and marketization of Canadian schools.**

An area that I feel best articulated a grand conception of how SJE and SPMs connect with, respond to, and influence Canadian education settings pertained to the marketization, branding, and commercialization of schools. Catherine Gidney and R. D. Gidney (2008) highlight how Canadian schools across Canada have had a long history with external and for-profit corporations. They provide evidence showing that Canadian schools have been the target of an innumerable amount of marketization tactics since the 1920s. According to Gidney and Gidney, corporations managed to successfully infiltrate classroom settings by taking advantage of the angsts surrounding progressive ideologies about teaching at the time. Schools were offered products that purported to improve teaching and learning so that the needs of students would be better met. Canadian school systems would eventually tighten their regulations with regards to corporate partnerships, but not before corporations would erode the faith and quality of the teaching profession by assuming the role of a more competent, contemporary, and confident educator.

Marjorie Johnstone and Eunjung Lee (2014) look at the branding of Canadian education in the context of the twenty-first century. In *Branded: International Education and 21st-century Canadian Immigration, Education Policy, and the Welfare State*, Johnstone and Lee (2014) argue that over the past two decades the focus for Canadian education has shifted from it serving as a public good, to it serving as a tool for economic interests and gains. To understand current trends in the Canadian global education discourse, Johnstone and Lee suggest that it is necessary to adopt a postcolonial perspective of Canada’s history. This would then lead one to make
connections between the original stakeholders of the founding state policies—and in essence, the founding education policies—how they were motivated by colonial, imperial and capitalistic transgressions. That is, the financial elite of that era had established roots within policies that would eventually feed into modern postcolonialism.

Johnstone and Lee (2014) also note that the Canadian government has deliberately intervened and exercised greater influence over Canadian education systems when traditionally the responsibility of carrying out education was left to the provinces. They proceed to argue that this has allowed the federal government to engage in the process of branding Canadian education as a commodity to sold, giving way to a new form of economic gains: “education migration” (Johnstone & Lee, 2014, p. 210). Education migration refers to the international promotion of education, particularly the education of western democratic societies, so as to encouragement its procurement from other nations. Johnstone and Lee highlight that it is not a coincidence that the big sellers of education are the western democratic nations that are inhabited and ran by predominantly European settlers, and that the buyers are typically the south-eastern European, Asian, and African nations. This is because as stated before, current policies pertaining to the international branding of education stem from colonial and imperial ideologies that for the most part placed a divide between western English speaking nations and eastern non-English nations (Said, 2003). The result of this new aged branding maintains a stark resemblance to the cautions raised by Gidney and Gidney (2008); that the necessary emphasis on SJE is being neglected. As a result, students are increasingly encouraged to take advantage of global economic trends and under encouraged to take responsibility for the ways in which they contribute to global inequities, disparities, and oppressive systems (Johnstone & Lee, 2014).
Influence of policies and political ideologies on Canadian education systems.

There have been numerous policy developments within Canada’s education settings over the recent decades. Sonia Ben Jaafar and Stephen Anderson (2007) provide a study that thoroughly looks into the trends of current education policies in Canada. In their study they develop two conceptual frameworks for understanding the processes of educational policies in Canada: Economic-Bureaucratic Accountability (EBA) and Ethical-Professional Accountability (EPA). They explain that

EBA assumes a private principle where an economic discourse exists for the collective good. This accountability orientation reflects a business metaphor that emphasizes a consumer-producer relationship and the delineation of responsibility for action… EPA [on the other hand] assumes a public principle where a democratic discourse exists for the collective good. This orientation is a process-based accountability where the means are emphasized over the ends of schooling. (Jaafar & Anderson, 2007, p. 211)

Jaafar and Anderson explain here is that the EBA model operates under notions that the schools ends—or economic sustainability—should govern its policies and processes, while the EPA model allows itself to be guided more by the means and needs of the actual teaching practice. While no single model wholly dominates Canadian policies, Jaafar and Anderson note that the EBA framework tends to resonate more strongly within policies. This is seen in the ways that policies use language such as: accountability, standardized testing, and expectations. They go on to explain that the presence of the EBA framework within Canadian education policies suggest a more centralized policy process, where the government maintains greater control over mandated educational policies. As was explained before and will be touched on again, having greater control over education policies has allowed the Canadian government to brand and market
Canadian education as a commodity (Johnstone & Lee, 2014), a practice that has significantly impacted the implementation of SJE.

Apple (2006) and Kumashiro (2008) have written extensively on the topic of politics, education, and social movements as the portray a metanarrative that depicts schools as the grand tool for state control with Right Wing political ideologies orchestrating a barrage of tactful designs to seize full control of the nation (Apple, 2006; Kumashiro, 2008). For Pinto, the Canadian plot is not much different. However, her analysis is focused on a much smaller geographic region, and she does not begin as far back in the nation’s history and develop of its political ideologies. Pinto (2013) uses Ontario as an example to illustrate how in the 1990s the provincial government initiated movement that would come to be known as the Common Sense Revolution (CSR). Pinto’s conception of neoliberalism is similar to those of Apple and Kumashiro as described earlier in the Education and Politics section of this chapter. She operates under the premise that neoliberalism is in fact a radicalized and contemporary model of conservatism that has managed to elude detection by manipulating key terms in language such as freedom and democracy. Pinto explains that the objectives of the CSR platform was to place the economy and market at the forefront of political discourses. This impacted education because it allowed for the creation of policies that focused more on efficiency and tighter regulations of practice as opposed to a higher quality culturally responsive pedagogy (Pinto, 2013). It did this by infusing policies with more bureaucratic language such as accountability, tracking, and standardized testing (Johnstone & Lee, 2014). As it is explained by Pinto, the CSR eroded and setback social justice discourses in education. Trends such as heightened attention to standardized testing and a more regulated practice still continue to hinder SJE in Canada today (Gérin-Lajoie, 2011).
Connections between Texts

To end this chapter I briefly identify some of the key connections between scholars and ideas in the literature review, to provide a more holistic conception of the interrelationships of various works. This literature review was conducted with the intention of uncovering work that speaks to the relationship between social justice education (SJE) and sociopolitical movements (SPMs). Banks (1985) identifies a connection between school systems and the Civil Rights movement that he terms the *Ethnic Revitalization Movements*. The Ethnic Revitalization Movements stem from the Civil Rights Movement and refer to the mobilization of marginalized populations in North America between the 1950 and 1960s to reform society in ways that reduce discrimination and oppression. One of the major breakthroughs of the Ethnic Revitalization Movements/Civil Rights Movements was the *Brown v. Board of Education* case (1954). In this case, the United States Supreme Court made the decision to declare the segregation of state-funded public institutions as unconstitutional. This breakthrough allowed for the development of anti-discriminatory educational policies and practices. Though they do not all use the term Ethnic Revitalization Movement to describe the process, Banks (1985; 2008; 2011), Gay (2003; 2004; 2010), Gérin-Lajoie (2012), and Ladson-Billings (1995; 2009) attribute a key component of this process to the increasing diversity within North American societies between the 1950s and 1970s. The result, as it is laid out by many scholars, is that SPMs provided a significant boost for progressive developments in educational policies and practices, factors that aid in the ultimate promotion of SJE.

There are many overlaps in the dialogues of character education and critical literacy. Winton (2010) describes character education as a form of practice that aims to directly or implicitly teach students about or instill within them important values and morals. Character
education encompasses multicultural education, democratic education, and global citizenship education. Banks (1985; 2008; 2012), Gay (2004), Gérin-Lajoie (2012), and Ladson-Billings (1995) all acknowledge that certain forms of character education such as anti-discriminatory and multicultural education arose in response to the changing immigration patterns and growing diversity within North American societies largely between the 1950s and 1970s. They note that the importance of these develops in character education rests in their promotion of critical literacy. Though they may state it in different ways, Appleman (2009), Andreotti (2006), Banks (1991; 2003), Christensen (2009), Comber (2015), and Rogers, et al. (2005) describe critical literacy as the constant critiquing and inquires of knowledge, knowledge producers, knowledge systems, knowledge assumptions, and those who are oppressed by or benefit off of knowledge beliefs.

The usage and manipulation of language received noteworthy attention from various scholars. Apple (2006), Kumashiro (2008), and Pinto (2013) place a great deal of emphasis on the importance of language and how it significantly shapes discourses on political ideologies. An example that they all put forth pertains to how neoliberalism is truly an offshoot of conservatism, and that the label “neoliberalism” dissuades people from discerning it as such. They go on to explain how neoliberalism appropriates key language such as freedom and self-determination in an attempt to radicalize their meanings. That is, neoliberalism does not promote freedom not in the same way that traditional liberalism did: freedom from oppression and discrimination. It promotes democratic freedom: the freedom to exercise meritocratic ideals and pursue economic gains and other agendas without the need to consider exploitative repercussions.

Naturally, the ways in which language is manipulated by overarching political groups and ideologies would have reverberating effects on various governmental policies. Apple,
Kumashiro, Ladson-Billings, Pinto, Johnstone speak about the importance of Language and how it effects policy and political ideologies. Jaafar and Anderson (2007) offer two frameworks for conceptualizing accountability policies in Canadian education: Economic-Bureaucratic Accountability (EBA) and Ethical-Professional Accountability (EPA). They conclude that though Canadian education systems are a hybrid of both frameworks, the EBA model tends to receive more precedence. Apple (2006), Gidney and Gidney (2008), Johnstone and Lee (2014), Kumashiro (2008), Pinto (2013), and Pinto, et al. (2012) all offer claims that support Jaafar and Anderson’s (2007) conception of EBA and its associated trends: an emphasis on standardized testing and accountability; the centralization of educational policy development; a business orientated (i.e. consumer-producer relationship) view of how schools should operate and with an added effort to prepare students as global consumers.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Restatement of Research Topic and Questions

This research project looked at an educator’s understanding, awareness, and the ways in which they responded to sociopolitical movements that impact educational settings. The particular overarching question that was addressed was: How do two educators with different roles in the same school perceive the effects that sociopolitical movements and social justice education have on school settings? The literature review process of this research topic was primarily driven by two terms: social justice education (SJE) and sociopolitical movements (SPM).

Procedure

The research project was conducted using a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2013). The topic that was investigated pertained to educators’ perspectives on the relationship between sociopolitical movements (SPMs) and social justice education (SJE). More specifically, I was interested in gaining a better understanding of how SPMs impact an educator’s practice as well as their understanding of SJE.

In this research I: conducted a literature review; recruited and facilitated two face-to-face interviews; recorded and transcribed the interviews; coded the data; and synthesized research findings. I outline in more detail below the process of my methodology.

Instruments of Data Collection

Literature review.

The purpose of the literature review was to survey and identify key works in the field of sociopolitical movements and social justice education. I am including a brief
explanation of my literature review here because it highlights key ideas that informed my data collection. Between the two large components of this research project, SJE received more attention. I felt that an in-depth analysis of SPMs was not necessary to address the questions of this research project. Some of the sub-categories within the field of SJE include: culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy, multicultural policies, democratic and global citizenship education, Civil Rights Movement, educational policies and standardized testing. There were a number of key authors within the various fields: Michael Apple, Geneva Gay, Gloria Ladson-Billing, James A. Banks, Kevin K. Kumashiro, and Laura Elizabeth Pinto.

Much of the research identified in this literature review was based in educational settings in the United States. This is because discourses pertaining to and surrounding SJE often made reference to how ethnic, racial, and cultural discrimination in the United States lead to disparities in the achievement, and how the Civil Rights Movement inspired progressive changes in educational settings all around the world. Though in less of an abundance, literature on sociopolitical movements and education in Canada were available. This literature focused on deeply rooted, implicit and discriminatory ideologies within the historical and current educational policies. The introduction of official multicultural policies created a different set of tensions and ethnic, cultural, and racial discourses.

**Interviews.**

I conducted two face-to-face semi-structured interviews. I deliberately chose to interview educators from the same school. The purpose was to provide perspectives on the research topic based on experiences from the same educational setting. I was also
interested in seeing how the participants viewed their roles as educators. To reflect this sentiment, some of my interview questions were structured in ways that allowed the participants to provide personal descriptions or explanations of various topics. For example, both interviews began with the question: *What is your role in the school?* Another question that solicited subjective explanations was: *What is social justice education to you?* I intentionally left these questions to be vague and broad so that each participant would not feel restricted in providing their explanations. I engaged in both interviews with the same sets of questions; however, I made slight alterations to some of the questions to acknowledge the fact that the participants do not hold identical roles in the school. Both sets of interview questions are included in the Appendices (Appendix C: Georgia Rose Interview Questions; Appendix D: Michael Trent Interview Questions).

**Interview participants.**

The first interview participant was a woman. Her name was Georgia Rose (pseudonym). She was a fulltime teacher whom had over 10 years of experience working in the school. The other participant was a male. His name was Michael Trent. He was a recently graduated teacher (less than four years), however, he did not work in the school as a fulltime teacher nor as a supply. Instead he worked within a separate organization that was housed within the school. As a coordinator within this organization, he collaborated with teachers and administrators within the school to provide the students with additional extra-curricular, employment, and academic support resources.

There were two criteria that I used to screen for my participants. First, they needed to have an awareness of social justice education and how it connected with their practice as educators. Second, both participants needed to be educators that worked in the
same school. I was placed in contact with both of the interview participants by method of referral. I was connected with Georgia through a mutual contact. In order to find a second participant I contacted the principal of Georgia’s school to inquire if they would be willing to refer and/or place me in contact with another educator within the school. The principal agreed to aid me in my research project and initiated the contact between Michael and I.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process began with me identifying an appropriate theoretical framework and philosophical assumption for engaging in my research. I ended up adopting a critical postmodern theoretical framework and an axiological philosophical assumption.

After conducting the interviews I transcribed them. An analysis of the data began even as I was transcribing because the process required me to repeatedly listen to the interviews. I developed a coding system that would require me to read the transcripts multiple times. The first reading was done with the intent of identifying any initial and reoccurring themes. For example, one of the initial themes pertained to any moments that the participants would make reference to the notion of experiencing resistance or pushback in their professional endeavours. I ended up identifying 15 codes. The second level of coding was aimed at identifying which passages had codes (i.e. themes identified from the first level of coding) and how many codes they embodied. By passage, I am referring to the opportunity for dialogue that either my participant or I would engage in before being interrupted or giving a break for the other to respond. For example, simply asking a question and pausing for the participant’s response would count as a passage.
The second level of coding also included the identification of some new themes. The third level of coding looked at what particular codes appeared in each passage. The fourth and final level of coding looked at what combination of codes appeared together and the frequency at which they did. Any combination of two more codes that appeared together three or more times were identified as prevalent overarching themes, and were in turn synthesized into a broader theme.

**Ethical Review Procedures**

I followed the ethical review approval procedures for the Master of Teaching program. The participants selected for the interview were educators that were above 18 years of age. Upon reaching out to participants they were provided with both a letter of consent (Appendix A) and a consent form (Appendix B). The letter of consent explained the topic and the purpose of the research project. The consent form was issued to the participants in advance, and was signed at the time of the interview to ensure that they were aware of all aspects of the research project. It also outlined in both the letter and in person that the participants’ participation involved the completion of a 30-60 minute interview that would be tape-recorded and transcribed. It was made clear that should the participant feel uncomfortable or unwilling to answer a question that they had the option of not answering. It was also made clear that participation on the research study was voluntary and that the participants had the option of opting out of the study at any time. Participants were also granted access to my notes (i.e. transcription) to ensure accuracy of the study.
Limitations of the Research

There were a number of limitations that impacted this research project and my ability to delve extensively into various facets. Perhaps, the most prominent limitation of this research project pertained to its time constraints. This research was a part of a two-year master’s program in teaching. The time allotted to the project was significantly hindered by the simultaneous and pressing commitment to the practicum placements.

The duration of the program did not only impact the time that I was able to devote to the research project, but it also impacted the nature of the study. Qualitative research approaches such as an ethnography or phenomenology required continuous and extensive contact with research participants. Because I was not able work with participants in that capacity, choosing to do a case study became the more feasible option. Creswell defines a case study as “research [that] involves the study of a case within a real-life, contemporary context or setting.” He also notes that some scholars consider a case study research “not [as] a methodology but a choice of what is to be studied (i.e. a case within a bounded system, bounded by time and place)” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97; emphasis included in original text). In addition to opting for a case study, I could only afford to conduct two interviews. Each ranging between 30-60 minutes in length. This also impacted one of the objectives of this research project which was to obtain multiple perspectives from a single educational setting.

There were also limitations that arose within the literature review process. The breadth of social justice education and sociopolitical movements as fields of work made it difficult to zone in on significant and relevant areas of scholarly work. Furthermore, while it would have been beneficial to have a deeper under of SPMs, engaging in more in
depth research on SPM would have compromised the review of literature on the main topic: SJE.
Chapter 4: Findings

Overview of Findings

This chapter entails an analysis of the data collected from the two qualitative interviews. Both of the interviews were semi-structured, and lasted approximately 45 minutes in length. This chapter will briefly describe the site of the interviews; considering that it plays a significant role in providing context to base the participants’ responses off of. Thereafter the chapter takes shape by mimicking the methodological structure for collecting and coding data that was outlined in Chapter 3: Methodology. Each coding level will be explained briefly and then displayed in the form of a chart. Evidence from the interview transcripts and references to the relevant sources from the review of literature will simultaneously be woven into each code level breakdown. The five-tiered coding system serves as an excellent resource for not only identifying key themes, but for also organizing the themes in a way that eases the processes of discerning the significance within the findings. I conclude the chapter with a summary of key points from the findings.

Research Site: Cardinal Wing Secondary School

Both interviews took place at the same location: Cardinal Wing Secondary School (pseudonym), an inner-city public school in Toronto. As noted by both participants, Cardinal Wing is a school that is ranked fairly high on the Learning Opportunity Index (LOI) chart (Toronto District School Board, 2014). This means that within the Toronto District School Board, Cardinal West is ranked as having one of the highest overall needs in terms of various socioeconomic factors. Factors that are taken into consideration include, but are not limited to: family income levels; parent/guardian education level; and
families with social assistance. Combined, the participants provided a great deal of insight on the operations and programs ran by the school as they pertain to the success of the students. Georgia highlighted two such programs that are intended to help transition grade nine newcomer students into the post-secondary environment while also implementing culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy.

Now one thing that I should mention up front is that [Cardinal Wing] is one of nine secondary schools engaged in a pilot right now. So we’re running an Africentric grade nine English curriculum… [R]ight now every school of the nine decided which of the core subjects they wanted to do it in. And the decision was made at our school that we would do it in English, so I’m the person who is kind of playing with that and trying to bring that in right now. So it’s a huge learning curve because it’s the first time. So I’m using my grade nine academic course that I’ve taught as my foundation and my framework. But I’m trying to change it so that it’s Africentric in its pedagogy and its feel...

[W]e have a course at our school—others, I think only two or three schools that have it—called Positive Peer Culture… it looks at a wide variety of issues like conflict mediation, and self-esteem, and you know racism, and substance abuse. It's kind of all of the -- kind of ancillary skills and topics that don't necessarily tie into one particular subject area. (Georgia)

The two programs that Georgia highlights above are directly tied to curricular outcomes for students. In both cases, students do not have to go out of their way to receive the specialized support, rather the programming is embedded within the compulsory curriculum.
Michael works for an independent organization that is based out of the school known as Success for Students (pseudonym). Success for Students (SFS) provides a number of programs and initiatives aimed at increasing student engagement and success. In describing what SFS does, he states:

there’s a vast, there's a lot of things, a myriad of things that I do from programming in terms of, um, what we call our school stream, and um, providing opportunities for youth outside the school… So that means you know, students are interested in something like, you know, film production or their interested in recording arts, you know, making connections with, you know, Toronto International Film Festival. Or the Remix Project… and being an advocate on [students’] behalf. So if there’s issues within the school and they have issues maybe with the teacher or admin, um, kind of help to try to mediate some of things. (Michael)

Unlike the initiatives described by Georgia, the ones that Michael describes err on the side of being extra-curricular endeavours. That is, students must access these resources of their own volition. Together, these insights highlight some of the initiative that Cardinal West has taken on in order to foster greater student engagement and success both within and outside of the classroom.

The fact that Cardinal Wing is ranked high on the LOI chart may play a part in the amount of resources it is able to afford, as schools that are ranked higher are targeted with additional resources and funding to improve student success. While the LOI chart helps to attain additional support, because it is heavily based off of factors that are linked to the immediate community it also creates a stigma for the schools that are identified
with the highest needs. Throughout the interview with Michael, he constantly notes that the school must function as a part of or in unison with the surrounding community. This is true, but it may also lead to complications. Because Cardinal Wing is located in a high priority neighbourhood its needs may become conflated with those of the community. And so even though both entities are inextricably intertwined and should adhere to better collaborative processes, both may have particular needs that could be lost in conflation.

In Georgia’s interview, she noted how she is cautious and aware of her association with Cardinal West:

I think one of the biggest obstacles that the school deals with is the whole stereotyping of [the particular community]. So our attachment is [a high priority neighbourhood]. So depending on where I am, and who I’m talking to, and the context of what I’m saying, I will either say that I teach in [this particular community] because I’m making a point by saying that. Or I’ll say my school is at [this intersection in the city]. And even though it’s basically the same thing, the connotation is totally different. One is neutral and one is not.

In this example, it is quite apparent that Georgia is well aware of the stigma that haunts her school. It is interesting to note however, that in attempting to evade or dispel the stigma, she alters the perspective on the community by re-labelling its geographic location. Georgia also makes references to receiving offers or receiving pressure to switch to schools with better overall socioeconomic circumstances.

But um, I've been at [Cardinal Wing] by choice for fifteen years. I've had so many opportunities to leave. I've had people pressure me to leave. Offering me wonderful, cushy, you know, great experiences in jobs. I left always to come
back. But in terms of [leaving], to go to another school, or to go to another place, I’ve resisted that because I think these kids, um, are the most inspirational kids I’ve ever worked with, and that I think exist. (Georgia)

There seems to be a connection between the stigmatization of the school created by the community in which it is a part of and its ranking on the LOI chart, and the pressures to switch schools that Georgia describes. The LOI chart is good for identifying schools with needs, but it is unclear if the identified needs are specific enough. Furthermore, since the document is open to the public, the LOI chart seems to contribute to the stigmatization of schools and their communities. Georgia seems to be limited in her capacity to engage in “neutral” conversations about the work done at her school if she mentions the name of her school or the community that it is in.

There has been a trend in international education to compare the success of students across various nations (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2012). In 2011 UNESCO released its most recent International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) report. The purpose of this report is to create international standards by which countries can compare the success of students. In order to achieve this, governments must alter their own processes of measuring students’ success so that there is consistency across various districts. Consequently, the areas that are measured must be simplified into broad generalizable categories in order to compare all districts. Governments achieve these adjustments through the structuring of their policies. Jaafar and Anderson (2007) highlight some of the policy trends in Canadian education. They explain how Canadian education systems tend to take more towards an Economic-Bureaucratic Accountability (EBA) framework for their educational policies.
This means that greater emphasis is placed on ensuring all school processes, including student success, are accounted for. In order to do this, governments embed policies with terms such as accountability, measurement, standards (Jaafar & Anderson, 2007). The 2014 LOI chart (Toronto District School Board, 2014) is an explicit example of this trend. As stated in the 2014 LOI report, “[t]he LOI measures relative need and compares all schools on exactly the same set of data collected in a consistent, reliable, and objective manner. The LOI removes the subjectivity that may shape perceptions of individual school needs” (Toronto District School Board, 2014, p. 1). Pinto (2013) explains that the increasing governmental concern for setting international standards in education is to meet economic agendas. She frames neoliberalism as a governmental movement aimed at emancipating economic pursuits from all restraints. Comparing student success internationally creates a global market for education in which immigrants can choose to invest in (Johnstone & Lee, 2014).

If it is true that the sociopolitical movement of neoliberalism is working towards eroding specialized educational programming through the decentralization of certain educational policies, then it becomes possible to see how the work of social justice educators like Georgia and Michael can be undermined. As Apple (2006) states, an SPM can be retrogressive in its agendas. This shows that SPMs and SJE are not always collaborative discourses, and that depending on one’s perspective of what an SPM entails, then SJE can be seen as an inherently opposing force.

**Coding Chart 1: Identifying Codes**

As mentioned in Chapter 2: Methodology of this report, I created a 5 tiered coding system for analyzing the data. The first level of the coding system involved the
reading and re-reading of the first interview transcript, during and after which key codes were identified within the participant’s responses. The same reading process was used for analyzing the second interview transcript; however, I continued to build on and refine the codes from the first interview. By the end of the process a total of fifteen codes were identified and distinguished using unique font and highlight colour sequences. Coding Chart 1 (Figure 1) was the same for both participants.

Figure 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Number</th>
<th>Code Name &amp; Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Perception of School/Community: Concerns and thoughts about the perception of the school and its community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Professional Pressure: Pressure to leave/switch schools/positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Students’ Wellbeing outside of School: Concern for students’ lives, experiences, and wellbeing outside of school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Reference to SJE/SPM: Reference to or associating social justice or SJE with SPMs (or vice versa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Defending/Challenging Beliefs: Defending the school and the community by confronting and challenging unfounded beliefs and stereotypes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Systems of Power: Addressing systems of power, privilege and oppression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Personal Narratives: Reference to personal life, experiences, and history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Race/Culture/Language: Bringing up race, culture or language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Concern for Academic Success: Showing genuine passion, care, and commitment to the academic engagement and success of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>School Processes/Procedures: Concerns and opinions about administration, colleagues, curriculum documents and operational procedures pertaining to the school as a whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Comparisons: Comparing students, schools, or administration between various educational settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Teaching Methods: Insight on teaching methodology or specific teaching examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>School &amp; Community: References or metaphors suggesting that the school and the community does or should function in unison or collaborate better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Resistance &amp; Expanding Thinking: References to experiences of feeling resistance or pushback or deliberately working to push students to expand their ways of thinking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Understanding SJE/SPM: Concerns pertaining to defining or understanding social justice, SJE or SPM

There are general ideas that tended to reoccur throughout various codes. At the onset of the coding process this posed as an issue because it made it hard to distinguish between codes. However, after reading the transcripts more carefully, slight and significant nuances became more apparent. For example, *Code 10: School Processes/Procedures* and *Code 13: School & Community* both address the ways in which schools should conduct their operations and processes; however, the former looks more at the bureaucratic processes while the later focuses more on ideological tenants. At the beginning of the interview with Michael, he shared some thoughts that help to illuminate these differences:

> [S]ome of what we do I think is possible for the school to take on, but I think that, um, it takes, its, I think it’s an expectation that may not necessarily, how do I say this? I think it’s something that’s, that requires a lot of effort and energy, and I know teachers are burdened with a lot. (Michael)

In this passage Michael speaks about the professional load of a teacher as being a burden and hindering them from being able to commit to students’ wellbeing in a greater capacity. Elsewhere in our conversation, he did not speak on the professional duties of a teacher, but rather critiqued the overall demeanour of the school and the ways that it organically, as opposed to bureaucratically communicates with the community:

> So it’s being in those conversations to say well this is what’s happening in the community. Therefore it's going to impact students right. They’re going to bring it into the classroom because the school should be an extension of the community
right. You’re in the community, you need to understand, like, this is what’s going on. (Michael)

What Michael’s responses highlight is the potential of SJE to address inequities within the seams of school structures. By inequities within the seams I am referring to areas of school settings that are generally overlooked or do not receive the same attention that is given to official school structures. There generally is no detailed policy or official procedure for ensuring collaboration between schools and communities; however, this type of interaction is inevitable and does deserve more attention. Michael makes the obvious connection that students carry with them experiences from the outside community into the classroom. Should the school be responsible for remaining up-to-date on the happenings in the community since it is situated there? Seeing that educational policies are increasingly becoming decentralized and oriented more towards standardization and accountability (Jaafar & Anderson, 2007; Johnstone & Lee, 2014), the task of being more responsive to the unique needs of a community may not be feasible.

**Coding Chart 2: Significant Passages**

The main objective of the second level of coding was to begin organizing the passages and their codes in order to better identify any correlations between the two. In *Coding Chart 2* (Figure 2: Georgia; Figure 3: Michael) the right column indicates the total number of codes in any given passage while the right column lists all passages according to how many codes they contain.
### Figure 2

**Georgia Rose**

**Coding Chart 2**

In this chart passages that have codes as well as how many codes they contain are identified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Codes in Passage</th>
<th>Passage Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No codes</td>
<td>1; 2; 3; 5; 6; 7; 9; 10; 11; 12; 13; 14; 15; 17; 19; 20; 21; 23; 25; 27; 28; 29; 31; 32; 33; 34; 35; 37; 39; 41; 43; 45; 47; 49; 51; 53; 54; 55; 57; 59; 60; 61; 63; 65; 66; 67; 69; 71; 73; 75; 77; 79; 80; 81; 83; 84; 85; 86; 87; 89; 91; 92; 93; 94; 95; 96; 97; 99; 100; 101; 102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 code</td>
<td>18; 22; 64; 68; 72; 74; 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 codes</td>
<td>4; 24; 26; 30; 56; 70; 76; 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 codes</td>
<td>36; 38; 44; 48; 50; 52; 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 codes</td>
<td>8; 40; 42; 62; 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 codes</td>
<td>90; 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 codes</td>
<td>46; 88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 3

**Michael Trent**

**Coding Chart 2**

In this chart passages that have codes as well as how many codes they contain are identified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Codes in Passage</th>
<th>Passage Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No codes</td>
<td>1; 3; 5; 7; 9; 11; 13; 15; 17; 19; 21; 23; 25; 26; 27; 29; 31; 33; 35; 37; 38; 39; 40; 41; 43; 44; 45; 46; 47; 49; 51; 52; 53; 54; 55; 56; 57; 58; 59; 61; 63; 64; 65; 66; 67; 68; 69; 70; 71; 73; 75; 76; 77; 78; 79; 80; 81; 83; 85; 87; 88; 89; 90; 91; 93; 94; 95; 96; 98; 99; 100; 101; 102; 103; 104; 105; 107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 code</td>
<td>16; 18; 62; 86; 106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 codes</td>
<td>4; 10; 12; 14; 28; 30; 34; 48; 50; 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 codes</td>
<td>8; 22; 24; 60; 74; 82; 92; 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 codes</td>
<td>2; 6; 20; 32; 36; 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 codes</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 codes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to highlighting the amount of codes within each passage, the layout of *Coding Chart 2* allowed me to focus on passages or sections from the transcript that seemed to be offering much insight, and might require a deeper analysis. For example, in Georgia’s *Coding Chart 2*, passages 40 and 42 have been identified as containing four codes each. I then suspected that many important topics were being raised in those exchanges, and as a result, would eventually engage in another reading too better understand dialogue that had taken place. In passage 39 I asked Georgia to share an example of how she might incorporate teachings that deal with sociopolitical movements (SPMs) or social justice within her classroom. The example she offered demonstrates a thoughtful and deliberate teaching methodology that raises many complex ideas:

I showed my grade nine English class the film “The Paper”… it follows an editor in terms of his personal life and also his life in his work. And in the movie they have a situation where two young Black men are framed for the murder of, you know, these older White business men. And we kind of see the behind the scenes of what’s happening. So when the film was over we talked about, and we explicitly looked at the terms; my kids have them defined in their notebooks: racism, bias, stereotyping, prejudice and what they are. And we’ve been looking at how they fit into that scenario in terms of um, the decisions that were made, the assumptions that were made. Um, the power and who had it and the, you know, who has the ability to make decisions and how they can affect you in your life.

(Georgia)

Not only does Georgia provide an effective lesson (*Code 12: Teaching Methods*) that exemplifies the practice of social justice education (SJE) (*Code 4: Reference to
SOCIOPOLITICAL MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION

*SJE/SPM*, but she addresses systems of power and privilege (*Code 6: Systems of Power*) and how they play out in her student’s lives (*Code 3: Students’ Wellbeing outside of School*). The work that Georgia highlights here is in line with the notion of SJE described by Pinto, et al. (2012); one of the key factors being her ability to tie the lesson to students’ lives and real world structures.

The same phenomenon takes place when Michael is asked to explain what SJE means to him. He is asked this question in passage 21. Touching on many of the same ideas raised by Georgia, his subsequent responses also indicated a deep and thoughtful understanding of what it means to practice SJE:

> I think it's um, I think it's having students understand the things that impact their day-to-day experiences. And not just their own, but those of their peers as well. And not necessarily those that are just at this school but around them right. And understanding all the important isms and how they may be interconnected and related and how they play off each other and what the purpose of them are.

(Michael)

Michael begins by noting that he is concerned with the “day-to-day” experiences of his students, but then moves to the grander concept of questioning the “isms.” Similarly, Georgia’s lesson through the movie began with a concrete incident between two parties, but then transcends everyday interactions to challenge pervasive systems and ideologies. As Georgia and Michael gradually critique grander discourses they draw closer and closer to principles and ideologies by which Canada conducts itself: neoliberalism and democracy. Similar to what was noted in the *Research Site* section of this chapter, a political ideology may serve as a sociopolitical movement. Many scholars believe that
neoliberalism actually creates opportunities for the exploitation and oppression of individuals within society (Apple, 2006; Kumashiro, 2008; Pinto, 2013). The result is a clash between SJE and certain SPMs. This not hard to imagine, however, when Apple explains that SPMs do not always serve progressive agendas (2006).

**Coding Chart 3: Code Sets**

The purpose of *Coding Chart 3* (Figure 4: Georgia; Figure 5: Michael) was to identify patterns within the codes. More specifically, it highlighted which codes tended to appear alongside one another within the same passage, and the frequency at which they did. It also highlighted which codes appeared most often throughout the transcript. The left column of *Coding Chart 3* (Figure 4: Georgia; Figure 5: Michael) listed the numbers (0 to 15) for all the codes. The right column listed all of the passages according to the codes that they contained. Therefore, if a passage had multiple codes, it would also appear in multiple rows (i.e. beside each code that it contained). The superscripts beside each passage number also indicate the specific codes that are found within that passage.

**Figure 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Number</th>
<th>Passages that Shared the Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Codes</td>
<td>1 2 3 5 6 7 9 10 11 12 13 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 17 19 20 21 23 25 27 28 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35 37 39 41 43 45</td>
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<td>47 49 51 53 54 55 57 59 60 61</td>
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<td></td>
<td>63 65 66 67 69 71 73 75 77 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>80 81 83 84 85 86 87 89 91 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>93 94 95 96 97 99 100 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1: Perception of School/Community</td>
<td>41.2 161.2,3,5,7,9 241.4 361.4,15 581.4,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>621.5,7,9 881.3,5,6,9,11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Professional Pressure</td>
<td>41.2 161.2,3,5,7,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Students’ Wellbeing outside of School</td>
<td>83,5,6,10 18 263,6 303,6 403,4,6,12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**SOCIOPOLITICAL MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Number</th>
<th>Passages that Shared the Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Perception of School/Community</td>
<td>2, 4, 10, 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Figure 5**

**Michael Trent**

**Coding Chart 3**

This chart identifies the particular codes within each passage.

Example of passage with three codes: 36\(^1\), 4, 15 (X = passage number and n... = codes within that passage)
| Code 3: Students’ Wellbeing Outside of School proved to be the most prevalent throughout Georgia’s transcript. While discussing various topics related to SJE and SPMs, Georgia remains consistent with her concern for the lifelong wellbeing of students. The following passage depicts the various ways in which Georgia cares for her students beyond her classroom walls:

So, my grade twelve English class, we do postcolonial literary critique. And in my class that’s the one that I think is the most important. I think it’s the one that helps them to understand their world here and back home, wherever back home is. Um, in a way that they may never have before, I think it -- it really helps them to make sense of their experiences, and their families’ experiences, and contextualize the world that they're in. (Georgia) |
Through introducing her students to postcolonialism Georgia imparts them with a lens that could radically alter the ways in which they see the world. By drawing the students’ attention to the experiences of their families she is explicitly demonstrating that her teaching methodology is unselfish. It is unselfish because it does not seek to merely meet the objectives of her classroom curriculum, but it seeks to meet the long-term needs of students’ lives.

*Code 9: Concern for Academic Success* and *Code 10: School Processes/Procedures* were most prevalent in Michael’s transcript. A mash of these two codes are best articulated in the following passage:

> Also discomfort I think with certain teachers having us being in the school, particularly being advocates for youth because our first and you know, first and foremost we hold ourselves accountable to students. Not even parents necessarily, but students right… And then you have a group in the school that's advocating for students, that might um, that might bring some discomfort to teachers. (Michael)

As Michael had noted elsewhere in the interview, his role within SFS allowed him to a different capacity when it came to interacting with students. The full-fledged commitment that he illustrated for the students seemed to be unmatched by the school. It is not hard to imagine how tension might occur between Cardinal Wing and SFS, or representatives from either side. His ability to have a stronger commitment with the students may be seen at times as undermining the schools’ operational procedures.
Coding Chart 4: Overarching Themes

The purpose of Coding Chart 4 (Figure 6: Georgia; Figure 7: Michael) was to identify patterns within the codes. More specifically, it highlighted which codes tended to appear alongside one another within the same passage, and the frequency at which they did. If the same set of codes appeared two or more times within three or more different passages then they were deemed as a significant trend. The set of codes were then translated into a more explanatory and encompassing theme.

Figure 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passages With the Same Sets of Codes</th>
<th>Sets of Codes that Appeared Within Two or More Different Passages</th>
<th>Prevalent and Overarching Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8, 88, 90</td>
<td>5: Defending/Challenging Beliefs</td>
<td>Confronting and challenging unfounded beliefs based on systems of power, privilege and oppression in defense of the school and the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6: Systems of Power</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16, 46, 62</td>
<td>7: Personal Narratives, 9: Concern for Academic Success</td>
<td>Personal commitment to caring for and ensuring the success of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16, 62, 88</td>
<td>1: Perception of School/Community</td>
<td>Identified concern and commitment to challenging unfounded beliefs about the community and school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5: Defending/Challenging Beliefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9: Concern for Academic Success</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24, 36, 58</td>
<td>1: Perception of School/Community</td>
<td>Social justice /SJE or SPM play an important role in shaping the perception of the school and community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4: Reference to SJE/SPM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 30, 82, 88 | 3: Students’ Wellbeing outside of School  
6: Systems of Power  
9: Concern for Academic Success | Overall concern for the ways in which students experience power, privilege and oppression in the lives (i.e. instilling life strategies). |
| 40, 50, 70 | 3: Students’ Wellbeing outside of School  
12: Teaching Methods | Teaching methodology aimed at deliberately preparing students for life challenges as opposed to merely achieving success in school. |
| 42, 46, 90 | 6: Systems of Power  
14: Resistance & Expanding Thinking | Feeling resistance or having to expand ways of thinking when addressing systems of power, privilege and oppression. |
| 42, 82, 88 | 3: Students’ Wellbeing outside of School  
6: Systems of Power  
11: Comparisons | How systems of power, privilege and oppression operate between different contexts, and how that impacts the lives and experiences of students. |
| 30, 48, 82, 88 | 3: Students’ Wellbeing outside of School  
9: Concern for Academic Success | Sincere concern and commitment to students’ overall wellbeing. |
| 42, 44, 82, 88 | 3: Students’ Wellbeing outside of School  
11: Comparisons | Heightened awareness and understanding of the experiences of students in relation to other educational settings. |
| 8, 26, 30, 40, 42, 50, 82, 88 | 3: Students’ Wellbeing outside of School  
6: Systems of Power | General concern for how systems of power, privilege and oppression impact the lives and experiences of students. |
### Coding Chart 4

This chart identifies the particular codes that appeared within each passage and the frequency in which they appeared together. Only sets of two or more different codes that appeared two or more times in three or more different passages were included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sets of Codes that Appeared Within Two or More different Passages</th>
<th>Prevalent and Overarching Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2, 6, 72 | 5: Defending/Challenging Beliefs  
10: School Processes/Procedures |
| 2, 6, 72 | Placing the needs of students first and foremost may stir up contentions between educators and their school systems (administration, colleagues, curriculums, and operational procedures). |
| 2, 82, 92 | 1: Perception of School/Community  
5: Defending/Challenging Beliefs  
10: School Processes/Procedures |
| 8, 20, 24, 32 | 1: Perception of School/Community  
9: Concern for Academic Success  
10: School Processes/Procedures |
| 22, 34, 36, 50, 96 | 4: Reference to SJE/SPM  
6: Systems of Power |
| | A key factor in SPMs or social justice/SJE is to address systems of power, privilege, and oppression. |
As Figure 6 indicates, there were a number of code sets that reoccurred throughout Georgia’s interview. The set that appeared the most comprised of Code 3: Students’ Wellbeing outside of School and Code 6: Systems of Power. I reread these two codes as well as the passages that they occurred in for the sake of developing an overarching theme that could best articulate the intersection of ideas, codes and contexts. The overarching theme that describes this code set is a general concern for how systems of power, privilege and oppression impact the lives and experiences of students. It was clear that Georgia had a sincere concern for how her students engage with systems of power, privilege and oppression.

-Social justice education]… relates to issues of power and privilege in -- in the ways like I mentioned: institutional ways and systemic ways—so really, teaching about that, making students aware of how those things are effecting their lives.
Making students aware of how those things exist in the current state of affairs. Um, helping students to feel empowered to address them as students and in the future. (Georgia)

There is great difficulty in pursuing the form of SJE that Georgia describes in this passage. Lessons must be designed in ways that consistently transcend the limits of the classroom. The notion of challenging institutional and systematic issues of power and privilege entails a commitment to addressing students’ belief systems. Belief systems are not always easily altered, especially if they are products of cultural influences or national ideologies. In addition, Georgia is teaching students to challenge systemic oppression, but she is doing so within the confines of an institution that operates under the premises of the very system that is being critiqued. Needless to say, there is an inherent contradiction in this conception of SJE. That is, how might an educator simultaneously teach students to critique a system, but still feel encouraged to take part in that same system?

While Georgia and Michael share certain ideologies, the prevalent overarching theme that seemed to guide their responses were different. Figure 7 lists reoccurring code sets for Michael’s interview. The set that appeared the most comprised of Code 1: Perception of School/Community and Code: 10: School Processes/Procedures. The overarching theme to describe this code set pertains to Michael’s concerns about how the school systems (administration, colleagues, curriculums, and operational procedures) take into consideration factors of the surrounding community when carrying out its duties. Michael explicitly stated that involving and taking into consideration the needs of the community is vital to the processes of SFS:
One of the things that’s important with our organization is that those that work for the organization are from the community; or have worked extensively in the community; have a very good understanding of the community itself is first and foremost important. I think much of what’s made possible and much of what has allowed us to be very successful is the deep, um, deep-rooted relationships we have with youth, and that’s important. And that comes from being accessible outside of the traditional hours of nine-to-five, or eight-to-eight, or whatever, three-thirty that teachers are, um so that accessibility to students falls outside of those boundaries that are created. (Michael)

Throughout the interview, Michael constantly notes that he feels it is important for a school like Cardinal Wing to consider all factors that impact students’ wellbeing, particularly the community. In the passage above, Michael speaks about being accessible to students outside of traditional school boundaries. This seems to be because traditional school settings are not designed in ways that are conducive to acknowledging community influences. What is common to both Georgia’s and Michaels overarching themes is the fact that they acknowledge and perhaps believe that the lives of students do not or should not revolve around school. This may be an important quality of SJE in the twenty-first century. While schools continue to be guided by policies that are antithetic to the individual needs of schools, it becomes increasingly necessary to step outside the boundaries of the traditional school setting to serve marginalized or underachieving students.
Coding Chart 5

Because both transcripts were analyzed using the same set of identified codes I developed a fifth tier of coding in order to account for the overlaps of code sets. In Coding Chart 5 (Figure 8) the descriptions of the overarching themes that appeared in both transcripts were listed.

Figure 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sets of Codes that Appeared Within Two or More different Passages</th>
<th>Prevalent and Overarching Themes in Both Transcripts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6: Systems of Power</td>
<td>Students should be engaged in the process of addressing systems of power, privilege, and oppression, and understanding how they impact their lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9: Concern for Academic Success</td>
<td>Caring for students entails acknowledging all factors—especially those from the outside community—that may impact their learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1: Perception of School/Community</td>
<td>Teaching methods should aim to deal with resistance or expand ways of thinking by thoroughly addressing systems of power, privilege and oppression, and how they impact students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I found the overarching theme between Code 6: Systems of Power and Code 9: Concern for Academic Success to be interesting because it somewhat addresses a question that I had raised in the previous section: how might an educator simultaneously teach students to critique a system, but still feel encouraged to take part in that same system? Though it may not be a resolution for this issue, Georgia does raise an idea that provides purpose for the practice of SJE. She stated:

I think it’s extremely important. As I said our kids experience things and might not be able to make sense of them because they just haven't thought of it in a
particular way, or understood it in a particular way, or had the language to articulate what it is they’re experiencing or feeling or um, you know, they’re own story. So, I think helping them to unpack it, helping them to understand where it’s coming from. Helping them to understand how the society is functioning or not functioning.

The notion of providing students with tools for articulating their lived experiences is quite powerful. In this case, SJE is not solely about challenging systems of oppression, but finding descriptions for life experiences. This conception of SJE incorporates sentiments of introspection.

This overarching theme appeared in the interview with Michael when he spoke about using Hip-Hop as a pedagogical tool:

I try to use popular culture to teach whatever I’m teaching. Particularly Hip-Hop culture. Because it makes it so much easier. Much easier because they can connect to it on so many levels. And it to use, it’s using what they are familiar with to kind of teach them what they’re not familiar with. So if we’re talking about social justice, if we’re talking about racism, or whatever the case, sexism, all these things are present within the culture of Hip-Hop right. So [how] can I get students to bring out examples within the culture they love and they, you know, see themselves in. (Michael)

Michael takes on somewhat of a constructivist approach as a way to keep students engaged when addressing systems of oppression. As he demonstrates, SJE is not only about addressing systems of oppression that students do not identify with in the first place, but also about questioning the values they have already accepted.
Summary of Findings

One of the key findings in the data pertains to the conceptions of SJE that educators offered. Georgia presented an account of SJE that places as much priority, and perhaps more, on developing life-long strategies for understanding and dealing with systematic oppression. Similarly, Michael offered an understanding of SJE that prioritizes all aspects of the student’s needs. In order to do this, school structures must be reconfigured in a way that allows students to confidently carry all of their experiences into the classroom.

Certain responses from the participants also revealed insights about the relationship between SJE and school structures. Whenever Georgia would comment on successful teaching methodologies or in-class examples of practice, she almost never referred to grades or academic scores as an affirmation. This is not to say that Georgia had little regard for grade-based achievements, but that perhaps her perception of a successful lesson, and in turn, effective social justice pedagogy, was based more on the ability to make clear connections from classroom learning to life experiences and systems beyond the confines of the actual school structure.

During the interview with Michael, he explicitly commented on the need for schools to increase their willingness and improve their processes for collaborating with the communities in which they are situated. He explained that factoring in community influences, actually allows schools to better address the unique needs of any given student. Michael did not believe claim that school structures were entirely inadequate or ineffective. He noted, however, that teaching for social justice could not be achieved within the confines of the school structure. And so though the organization that Michael
worked for was based within the school, he explained that they made a conscious effort remain accessible for students outside of traditional hours and structures. What was present in both Georgia’s and Michael’s responses was the necessity to connect with students’ lived experiences outside of the classroom.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview of Discussion

This research project helped to uncover a myriad of noteworthy insights. This is largely due to the fact that I chose to explore the intersections between two extremely broad topics: social justice education (SJE) and sociopolitical movements (SPMs). To narrow the breadth of the potential subject matter I decided to look at the relationship between SJE and SPMs within school settings. Lastly, I decided to select participants from the same research site to see if perspectives on the research topic might vary based on roles. As a result, the primary research question that ended up guiding this research project was as follows: How do two educators with different roles in the same school perceive the effects that SPMs and SJE have on school settings? I adopted two sub-questions for the purpose of developing more scaffolding for addressing this larger topic. They were: 1) what kind of understandings do educators have of SJE and SPM? And, 2) in what ways can an educator utilize SPMs and SJE to positively benefit their practice? Through attempting to address these questions I landed myself in subject matter that seemed far removed from the research topic that I had just outlined, but upon closer inspection, I was able to make deep and abstract connections between the review of literature, the findings and the topic. This chapter briefly highlights these connections and concludes with implications and recommendations for practice and future studies.

Political Ideologies as Sociopolitical Movements

When I chose to look at how SPMs impact school settings I expected to find a number of studies that focused on specific examples such as Pride, Civil Rights, or Idle No More just to name a few. Studies that looked at these entities did arise; however, my
interests were piqued when I came across studies that looked at political ideologies as SPMs. Apple (2006) and Kumashiro (2008) explain how political ideologies function as sociopolitical movements. They note that neoliberalism serves as a guise for the retrogressive agendas of various organizations. Pinto (2013) adds that neoliberalism serves as a tool to erode SJE and place the economy at the center of Canada’s concerns.

**Trends of Standardization and Accountability**

Of the two interview participants, Michael, seemed to be demonstrate marginal concern for the trends of standardization and accountability within the school. I say marginal because he did not specifically make reference to either of the two terms. However, his responses at times suggest that the school should consider expanding its idea of what it means to account for a students’ needs by becoming more adept in understanding what goes on in the community. The accountability that Michael brought up is different from the kinds of accountability highlighted by some scholars. For example, the type of accountability that Jaafar and Anderson (2007) describes pertains to the bureaucratic methods for tracking school processes and procedures. Michael’s conception of accountability prioritizes the individual needs of the students while Jaafar and Anderson’s accountability prioritizes the sustainability and efficiency of the overall school. These two frameworks show that accountability for the student and accountability for the school entail different kinds of commitments.

**International Marketization of Education**

Corporations had managed to infiltrate education institutions from as early as the twentieth century. Gidney and Gidney (2008) explain that corporations had been taking advantage of students as consumers as well as placing pressure on parents since the
1920s. Corporations also played on the insecurities pertaining to the adequacy of public schooling by purporting to offer more refined learning opportunities through their products. The marketization of schools has only intensified in the current decade. Johnstone and Lee (2014) highlight that education as a whole now serves as an international commodity. Nations use this trend to attract financial investments from international students. The international branding of schools is made possible due to the standards of practice pushed by the overarching and dominating political ideology. The process is reinforced by the increasingly standardized policy structures. An explicit example is found in the participants’ references to the Toronto District School Board’s LOI chart (2014) or UNESCO’s (2012) International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) report. These reports help to reinforce the process of comparing school settings even across international contexts.

**Sociopolitical Movements and Contemporary Social Justice Education**

Many of the findings in the research report complicate the relationship between SPMs and SJE. SPMs like the Civil Rights Movement played a significant role in shaping the tenants of SJE. On the other hand, political SPMs can work to combat the aims of SJE. In a time where educational settings are in constant flux I have identified a concept that I call “contemporary social justice education” (CSJE). CSJE is a form of SJE that is cognizant of the political ideologies that influence education institutions, and as a result, looks beyond the confines of the classroom for establishing learning outcomes and taking into consideration all of a student’s needs, not just those that are directly related to the classroom. Academic success (i.e. grades) are undoubtedly an important part of the schooling process; however, there may arise circumstances where in order to improve
academic success, preliminary concerns must be amended. Students engage with external influences before, during, and after they leave schools. CSJE seeks to be just as pervasive as these influences through acknowledging what students have experienced before they entered the classroom, and by preparing them for what they might engage with after they leave the classroom.

**Implications**

This research has allowed me to see that all processes within a school are linked to overarching agendas. For example, in the past decade the Ontario Ministry of Education has taken on a myriad of educational initiatives such as the Specialist High Skills Major, Dual Credits, or the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program. However, each of these programs are intended to address a particular policy: Student Success / Learning to 18 (SS/L18) (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). The SS/L18 strategy can in turn be linked to UNESCO’s International Standard Classification of Education (2012). The final outcome is a comparison of student outcomes across the globe. Through analyzing these connections an educator may gain a better understanding of the pressures associated with standardization and accountability, and in turn, make more informed decisions with regards to their practice.

**Recommendations for Future Study**

In order to gain a complex and detailed account of the trends between SJE, SPMs and politics, I recommend reading “Educating the ‘Right’ Way : Markets, Standards, God, and Inequality” by Michael Apple (2006) and “The Seduction of Common Sense: How the Right has Framed the Debate on America’s Schools” by Kevin Kumashiro (2008). Together, these authors do an excellent job of articulating how political
ideologies operate as SPMs, and how they have significantly shaped North American educational policy. For an understanding of how this phenomenon plays out in the Canadian education system is it worthwhile to read the works of Elizabeth Pinto (2013), Marjorie Johnstone and Eungjung Lee (2014) and Diane Gérin-Lajoie (2012).

Suggestions for future research might include looking into specific sociopolitical movements that have both helped to create equitable and/or inequitable educational policies. It would also be worthwhile to explore the relationship between the school and its surrounding community. There would be also be value in exploring the following: a teacher’s ability to distinguish between progressive and retrogressive sociopolitical movements; strategies for teaching towards equity and against standardizations; or adjusting social justice education to address contemporary changes and complications.

In the future I would like to explore the notion of contemporary social justice education (CSJE). As local and international standards of education undergo rapid changes I feel it is important to further develop and refine what it means to teach for social justice in diverse, democratic and globalized school settings. This is especially in light of the fact that educational policies are adapting more centralized approaches to accounting for student success, which in turn limits resources allotted for uniquely responsive services.

**Conclusion**

This research project demonstrated that educators within the same institution can take on starkly different ideas of what it means to teach for social justice. This is largely tied to the role that an educator may serve within a school. A classroom teacher must always be aware of the constraints of the classroom. This is not limited to merely
understanding what is appropriate for the classroom. Teachers must also take into consideration the belief systems of parents and administration. An educator in a role similar to that of Michael’s would have fewer restrictions on their choices of instruction. It also showed that social justice educators must constantly innovate ways to transcend the confines of the traditional classroom setting. One might argue that their primary objective is to do what it takes to liaise classroom learning with lived experiences. The praxis of a social justice educator is volatile. This is indicated by the complicated relationship between social justice education and sociopolitical movements. In one instant the Civil Rights Movement might serve as an invaluable vehicle for effecting anti-discriminatory change. In another instant social justice education is seeking to critically assess and reform political and ideological sociopolitical movements such as neoliberalism and democracy. This seems to be the current dynamics of contemporary social justice education. It is a practice that is relentless, hopeful, and certainly worth investigating further.
References


Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interview

Date: ________________

Dear ________________,

I am Marlon Redley-Smith. I am a graduate student enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate in the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. I am studying how educators perceive sociopolitical movements and the effects that they may have on school systems and teaching practices. 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 research supervisor is Dr. Rob Simon. 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 30-60 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 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 person who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor. 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.

Sincerely,

Marlon Redley-Smith
m.redley.smith@mail.utoronto.ca

Rob Simon, Assistant Professor
Research Supervisor
Curriculum, Teaching & Learning
University of Toronto/OISE
252 Bloor Street West
Toronto, ON M5S 1V6
rob.simon@utoronto.ca
Appendix B: Consent Form for Interview

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 Marlon Redley-Smith and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described.

Signature: ______________________________________

Name (printed): ___________________________________

Date: ______________________
Appendix C: Georgia Rose Interview Questions

Background Information

- What is your role in the school?
- What subjects do you teach?
- How would you describe Westview Centennial Secondary School?

About teachers awareness of sociopolitical movements and social justice education

- What is a sociopolitical movement to you?
  - What might be some examples (Civil Rights, Neoliberalism, Pride)?
  - Have you ever considered conservatism, liberalism, or neoliberalism to be sociopolitical movements? (If so, then in what ways?)

- What is social justice education to you?
  - What might be some examples (type of lesson, a philosophy, a policy)?
  - Would you describe a student group or society as a sociopolitical movement? (Why or why not)

- Do you think there is any connection between sociopolitical movements and social justice education? (Please explain that connection)

About teacher’s social education practice

- How would you describe your teaching methodology?
- How do sociopolitical movements impact the classes you teach?
- How might you engage your class in lessons or dialogues pertaining to sociopolitical movements?
- What role—if any—does a social justice education framework play in your teaching practice?

About social justice education pertaining to students

- In your experience, how have students responded to social justice education?
  - What do you think is the reason for that?
- How would you describe the in-class relationship between you and your students?
- How would you describe the role of a student within a social justice education framework?
• If you had to define a key educational goal for you and your students what would it be? (Why?)

About social justice education pertaining to the teacher
• How do you perceive your role as the teacher within a social justice education framework? (Sage/ facilitator/ lecturer)
• How do you think social justice education impacts you as a teacher? (Why or why not? / Or elaborate)

About social justice education in the school
• What sort of student organizations or societies exist within the school (e.g. Gay Straight Alliance, Black History Awareness Committee, Asian Heritage Awareness Committee)?
  ➢ How would you describe the relationship between student societies and organizations within the school and sociopolitical movements outside of the school?
• How are your feelings towards the current sociopolitical climate within the school?
• How would you describe your involvement within the sociopolitical movements at your school?
  ➢ How would you describe the involvement of your colleagues?
  ➢ How would you describe the Involvement of students?
  ➢ Administration?
• What sorts of barriers do you perceive to be in place for a principal who is attempting to implement social justice education?
• In what ways do you experience support—or a lack thereof—from the school as a whole when it comes to social justice education? (Think about other teachers, administration, principals, students, and even the surrounding community)
• How important would you say social justice education is to your school?

Closing
• What potential outcomes do you see for your school when it comes to engaging with sociopolitical movements and social justice education?
  ➢ Could you elaborate? (What are the benefits/downfalls)
• What advice do you have for an educator that is seeking to implement social justice education within their classroom?
• Is there anything else you would like to add? (What did I miss?)
Appendix D: Michael Trent Interview Questions

Background Information

- What is your role in the school?
- What programs do you facilitate?
- How would you describe Westview Centennial Secondary School?

About educator’s awareness of sociopolitical movements and social justice education

- What is a sociopolitical movement to you?
  - What might be some examples (Civil Rights, Neoliberalism, Pride)?
  - Have you ever considered conservatism, liberalism, or neoliberalism to be sociopolitical movements? (If so, then in what ways?)
    1. What is your understanding of the “isms” and do you feel they impact education in any way?
- What is social justice education to you?
  - What might be some examples (type of lesson, a philosophy, a policy)?
  - Would you describe a student group or society as a sociopolitical movement? (Why or why not)
- Do you think there is any connection between sociopolitical movements and social justice education? (Please explain that connection)

About educator’s social education practice

- How would you describe your facilitative methodology?
- How do sociopolitical movements impact the programs you run?
- How might you engage youth in lessons or dialogues pertaining to sociopolitical movements?
- In what ways—if any—does social justice educational fit into your practice?

About social justice education pertaining to students

- In your experience, how have students responded to social justice education?
  - What do you think is the reason for the particular ways in which they’ve responded?
- How would you describe the relationship between you and your students?
• How would you describe the role of a student within a social justice education framework?

• If you had to define a key educational goal for you and your students what would it be? (Why?)

**About social justice education pertaining to the teacher**

• How do you perceive your role as the educator within a social justice education framework? (e.g. Sage/ facilitator/ lecturer)

• How do you think social justice education impacts you as an educator? (Why or why not? / Or elaborate)

**About social justice education in the school**

• What sort of student organizations or societies exist within the school (e.g. Gay Straight Alliance, Black History Awareness Committee, Asian Heritage Awareness Committee)?
  ➢ How would you describe the relationship between student societies and organizations within the school and sociopolitical movements outside of the school? (e.g. is one influenced by the other)

• How are your feelings towards the current sociopolitical climate within the school?

• How would you describe your involvement within the sociopolitical movements at your school?
  ➢ How would you describe the involvement of your colleagues?
  ➢ How would you describe the Involvement of students?
  ➢ Administration?

• What sorts of barriers do you perceive to be in place for a resource educator who is attempting to implement social justice education?

• In what ways do you experience support—or a lack thereof—from the school as a whole when it comes to social justice education? (Think about other teachers, administration, principals, students, and even the surrounding community)

• How important would you say social justice education is to your school?
Closing

- What potential outcomes do you see for your school when it comes to engaging with sociopolitical movements and social justice education?
  - Could you elaborate? (What are the benefits/downfalls)

- What advice do you have for an educator that is seeking to implement social justice education within their programming?

- Is there anything else you would like to add? (What did I miss?)