PERPETUALLY "NEEDS IMPROVEMENT":

PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EDUCATION

by

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ABSTRACT

The author of this thesis uses grounded theory methodology to illuminate pre-service teachers' understandings of social justice concepts, theories, and perspectives at the beginning of their teacher education programs. Pre-service teachers' perceptions of inequity, marginalization, and deep systematic oppression, and how these perceptions are influenced by their positionalities and inform their views of social justice education, are explored. Such an exploration involves an analysis of how inequality, power, and privilege are embedded within social structures and perpetuated through socialization in educational contexts. In analysis of their experiences shared through online surveys, the author uncovers multiple complexities in pre-service teachers' understandings of social justice and social justice education. While the majority of participants felt a moral responsibility to engage in social justice education, their conceptualization of such concepts was heavily influenced by discourses of tolerance and individualism, both of which serve to perpetuate social injustices. Recommendations for teacher education programs are provided in an attempt to increase pre-service teacher understanding of social justice, and their roles and responsibilities in relation to social justice in their future work as educators.

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Chapter One: "Progressing with Difficulty": Social Justice and Social Justice Education

> All teachers, I believe, need to be prepared to teach all students well. And I argue that
> teachers need to be prepared to do more than teach subject matter such as science,
> Language Arts, social studies, and mathematics (Milner, 2011, p. 87).

This chapter highlights current and historical issues in social justice within education and teacher education programs in Ontario that are central to the foundation and rationale of this research project. This chapter includes a brief overview of the context of social justice in education, the research question and research objectives guiding this project, and researcher positionality. I begin by explaining current issues in social justice in education and the importance of pre-service teacher awareness of such education.

Effective, equitable education teaching requires a commitment to more than simply providing content-based learning experiences for students. It requires that teachers develop personal, critical, socio-political awareness and learn to foster this same awareness in their students (Kugelmass, 2000). As Milner (2011) suggests in the epigraph above, teaching students "well" requires a concerted effort towards shaping schools where students who are members of marginalized groups can learn on par with those who are members of dominant groups.

Schools and classrooms are increasingly diverse and teachers in North America over-represent the dominant group, specifically, people who are White, heterosexual, middle class, and Christian (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). According to Kugelmass (2000), many pre-service teachers from these dominant groups want to be advocates for change in educational systems. However, there is often a discrepancy between theory and practice of anti-oppression

education (Joshee, 2007). This discrepancy is characterized by pre-service teacher resistance to engage in social justice work and results in a difference between teachers' articulated beliefs and their actions (Solomon, Singer, Campbell, & Allen, 2011). Such a discrepancy highlights the need for understanding imbalances of social power and how they affect pre-service teachers' comprehensions of equity in the classroom (Solomon et al., 2011).

In this research, my aim is to illuminate pre-service teachers' understanding of social justice concepts, including oppression, power, privilege, and equity, and how these concepts relate to education. As a theoretical base, I drew from Sensoy and DiAngelo's (2012) conceptualization of social justice, which they describe as a commitment to actively challenging inequity between members of society in order to eliminate marginalization of specific groups' oppression. This is not only a challenge of pedagogy and practice, but also of policy and curriculum. For instance, curriculum documents created by the Ontario Ministry of Education, such as *Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009)* and *Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools (2008)* mandate that education should respond to social justice issues. In order to effectively fulfill this mandate, my belief is that pre-service teachers must adequately reflect on their own positionality, which Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) theorize as one's position in relation to others on the basis of intersecting social categories. These include (but are not limited to) race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and religion, all of which collectively shape one's understanding and experience of the social world. Acknowledging positionality is a crucial aspect when engaging in social justice pedagogy as it involves recognizing that knowledge is socially constructed, subjective, and dependent on the intersection of one's positionality and the values, beliefs, identities, and experiences that result from that positionality (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Acknowledging one's positionality

can provide a starting point for understanding oppression, power, and privilege in their contemporary forms. I argue that awareness of these is essential to the process of working towards equality.

Many teacher education programs recognize the need for pre-service teachers to become aware of systematic sources of inequity and address them openly in schools (James, 1997; Solomon, 1995, 1998; & Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1996). Teacher education programs across Ontario incorporate social justice education as an important aspect in their programs, mission statements, and application processes (See, for instance, Brock University, 2010; Lakehead University, 2012; Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 2012). The transformation process for increasing social justice understanding begins in pre-service teacher education programs (Solomon et al., 2011). Therefore, in order to assess the efficacy of this mission, acquiring information on pre-service teachers' knowledge of social justice concepts, theories, and perspectives in relation to education while they are in teacher education programs is prudent. However, despite policies offered by teacher education programs, Carr (2008) found that many pre-service teachers deem social justice courses to be less central to their learning than courses they perceived as pertaining directly to the practice of teaching. He suggests that this is due to overly intensive teacher education programs, where teaching for social justice may be a singular course among several others, or social justice topics may only be integrated into already existing courses. My own view is analogous to the findings highlighted by Carr; that the high workload required in teacher education programs increases the desire of pre-service teachers to seek a simplistic approach for teaching concepts related to social justice. For example, integrating multicultural resources into fixed lessons, rather than aiming to reframe curricula to better

represent diverse groups of students. Social justice education, however, cannot be achieved through a simple approach.

My aim for this project was to delve further into pre-service teachers' beginning understandings of social justice issues and social justice education because, although many may agree that social justice education is imperative for all pre-service teachers, its effectiveness in schools, and the ability of teachers to provide equitable education, is a different and highly debatable matter altogether. Whereas some are convinced that education has been made equitable and accessible to all, I maintain that, despite policy and widespread agreement of the importance of social justice in education, inadequate and/or distorted understanding of issues such as oppression, power, privilege, and equality hinder the goals of social justice education as they are presented by curriculum documents. Exploring pre-service teachers' understandings of social justice education provides insight into their perceptions of such topics in terms of pedagogical approaches, which could, in turn, enhance their future students' success, particularly that of minoritized groups (Grant & Zwier, 2011), and sheds important light on the varying understandings of, and commitment to, social justice education.

In my thesis research, I uncover what pre-service teachers already know about social justice concepts and what they know about their responsibilities as future teachers in systems of education that exist in the context of provincial and national social rights legislation. I build knowledge about pre-service teachers' understandings of social justice concepts, theories, and perspectives as they began their teacher education programs. Specifically, I explore how pre-service teachers perceive inequities, marginalization, and deep systematic oppression, and how these perceptions are influenced by their positionalities, and inform their views of social justice education. From an educational perspective, my research involves a recognition of how

inequality, power, and privilege are embedded within social structures and perpetuated by socialization (specifically in educational institutions).

Research Question

How do pre-service Bachelor of Education students understand social justice concepts such as oppression, power, privilege, equity, and equality as they begin their teacher education programs, and what do they know about the expectations of the Ontario Ministry of Education of teachers in relation to social justice in education and curriculum?

Research Objectives

1. Examine pre-service teachers' perceptions on their roles and responsibilities as educators in relation to social justice issues in education and as expected by the Ontario Ministry of Education;

2. Investigate pre-service teachers' understandings of social justice in relation to education, including concepts such as oppression, power, privilege, equity, and equality; and;

3. Identify specific recommendations for administrators and professors in the faculty of education that would enhance social justice pedagogy of instructors who teach pre-service teachers.

Researcher Positionality

Researcher positionality directs and influences the research process (Charmaz, 2006), and is informed by one's life experiences, creating unique perspectives, interests, and values about and within the world. Therefore, it is crucial to explicate my positionality, including the process with which I approached this research project.

As a White, middle-class, able, heterosexual, and university-educated female, I am extremely privileged. I moved fairly easily through elementary school, high school, and

completed a university degree, after which I decided to apply to a teacher education program. At the time, I was largely naive to my privileged position and how it impacted the ease with which I moved up and through various educational institutions. Upon entering the Bachelor of Education program at Trent University, I became more aware of the privilege and power I hold in society. Through course work pertaining to social power inequities I became aware of how my social positioning has influenced my successes and failures. It was also through my practical teaching experience that I became aware of the varying social positions of the students I was teaching. Hence, it was during this program that I developed a passion for social justice and equity in education, specifically, the need to equip pre-service teachers with knowledge about social justice issues so that they may foster safe and equitable classrooms in their future work as educators.

As an aspiring teacher, I believe that social justice education is at the forefront of my responsibility as an educator, and I am committed to continually deepening my understanding of social justice issues as they apply to education. However, I feel that many of my colleagues and future educators do not leave their teacher education programs with the same understanding of and commitment to social justice education. This may be due, in part, to a conservative and simplistic ideology of fairness, that is, that everyone should be treated equally (Bierlein, 1993; Chambers, Schlenker, & Collisson, 2013). Although this idea aims to provide equal opportunity for all, it undermines the fact that individual students have particular needs that are met through equity rather than equality, particularly those who are members of identifiable, marginalized groups. The lack of importance for engaging critically in social justice issues critically is troubling and requires further attention by educational researchers. This lack is what drives my thesis research.

My research is grounded in my experience of completing the one-year Bachelor of Education program at Trent University in 2011 and working as a research assistant under Dr. Christine Cho in the field of social justice and anti-oppression in teacher education programs. I assisted with a research project that involved pre-service teachers who explicitly taught lessons pertaining to anti-oppression issues. These included racism, sexism, and homophobia, among others. This project exposed some of the fears and misconceptions pre-service teachers had when they taught lessons that overtly dealt with issues that some deem controversial (for example, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) issues). An integral fear faced by pre-service teachers was their assumption that the topics would not be well received by others, such as parents, students, and administration. A key misconception of pre-service teachers was that the topics they were to teach were inappropriate due to the age of the students, or that the topics should not be taught in general in schools and by teachers. Although this project only engaged pre-service teachers in one anti-oppression lesson during their teacher education program, the reflections that came out of the lesson were extremely valuable in uncovering some of the complexities involved in engaging in overt anti-oppression teachings.

As a former Bachelor of Education student and current Master's of Education student, I have had the opportunity to observe the pre-service teacher program as an insider and researcher. These multiple perspectives have led me to conclude, substantiated by various others, such as Agarwal (2008), James (1997), Solomon (1998), and Solomon and Levine-Rasky (1996), that students graduating from one-year Bachelor of Education programs have not attributed meaning and a lasting commitment to social justice education. As an educational researcher committed to social justice pedagogy, I feel an ethical responsibility to respond to this issue by addressing social injustices in society, specifically how they are reflected in the Ontario education system.

In this chapter, I introduced the research question through an overview of the current context of social justice in education, broadly, and in teacher education, specifically. The research question and objectives guide the research process and are the focal point of this thesis. A discussion of my positionality provided information on how I arrived at the research question and subsequently began to conduct this thesis research. Chapter Two will further delve into the scholarly terrain of social justice and education through a literature review of such concepts as oppression, power, privilege, equity, including their intersections and relations to teacher education, and positionality.

Chapter Two: "Progress Made": Scholarly Review

In this chapter, I explore the scholarship on some key concepts in social justice education, notably oppression, power, privilege, and equity. I then discuss their intersections and what those mean for education, specifically how education perpetuates inequities. Finally, I discuss the provision and acquisition of social justice education by pre-service teachers in teacher education programs.

Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) define "social justice" as a commitment to equity for all members of society and the elimination of marginalized groups' oppression. From an educational perspective, McGee Banks and Banks (1995) suggest that such a commitment involves "teaching strategies and classroom environments that help students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively within, and help create and perpetuate, a just, humane and democratic society" (p. 152). In an attempt to achieve equity for all, the oppression of marginalized groups must be recognized and addressed. Thus, analyses of how oppression, power, and privilege are embedded in and perpetuated by socialization and social structures are essential to the promotion of social justice education.

Oppression. Oppression is defined by Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) as a set of policies, practices, traditions, norms, definitions, and explanations that serve to exploit one social group to the benefit of another social group. This conceptualization is shared by Zutlevics (2002), who states that oppression involves being unjustly denied autonomy, that is, that oppressed people tend to be unable to live their lives according to their own life plans without the freedom afforded others. In critical social justice education, exploited social groups are often referred to as minoritized groups, whereas dominant social groups are those who benefit from such

exploitation (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012), for example, men and woman, where men are the dominant group, and able and disabled, where able people are dominant and people who are disabled are minoritized. This is to signal that minoritized groups' oppression is historical, ideological, institutional, and cultural (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

Theories of oppression are, however, contested. Some claim that oppression cannot be defined in a broad sense that includes all forms of discrimination. For example, Young (1990) and Walker (1998) each conclude that the term "oppression" should refer to many individual situations. Young (1990) states that it is unwise to generalize the definition of oppression due to the varying factors and circumstances that constitute oppression, making individual experiences of oppression irreducible. Thus, Young (1990) provides an examination of multiple ways in which oppression can occur, namely: exploitation, marginalization, culture of imperialism, and violence, stating that these types of oppression should not be reduced to a general concept of oppression.

My view is that although oppression takes many forms, the general concept remains that some social groups are exploited to the benefit of others. For the purposes on this paper, my understanding of, and use of the word "oppression" coincides with that of Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) and Zutlevics (2002). Hence, oppression is conceptualized as denying certain social groups full access and potential in a given society (Bailey, 1998; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012) as the result of relationships between groups who are privileged and groups who are oppressed (Johnson, 2006; Prilleltensky, 2003). Groups, who have historically held social power, continue to do so, and will continue to hold such power in the future. Oppression results in privilege of dominant groups, and as such privilege is largely unseen by those who possess it, it is left unaddressed. Because those with privilege often do not experience the oppression faced by

minoritized groups, they do not feel the need to change social structures to correct the imbalance of power (DiAngelo, 2010). Additionally, although minoritized groups are often aware of their oppression, they do not hold the social power necessary to raise awareness to such inequities, and their feelings are often unheard and/or minimized by dominant groups holding the power to create social change, and so, oppression and privilege are continually perpetuated to the same social groups.

Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) state that oppression involves institutional control, ideological domination, and the imposition of the dominant groups' culture (for example, men and able-bodied people) onto the minority groups (for example, women and people who are disabled), which I explain below. Social ideas are constructed and reinforced through powerful institutions, such as media and popular culture; therefore our opinions, perspectives, and ideas are the products of interlocking, ongoing social messages (DiAngelo, 2010). These messages make it difficult to see oppression, (for dominant groups who have internalized the justifications for their positions of dominance, and for oppressed groups, who have internalized the justifications for their positions of subordination) and are therefore central to understanding how oppression is normalized (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

Institutional control refers to the fact that oppression is present across major institutions, such as the government, media, economics, and religion, which function to maintaining inequity (Prilleltensky, 2003). A key example of institutional control as provided by Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) is that of female suffrage. Because men held most of the positions of power in all the key institutions (for example, in government, medicine, and religion), all conveying that women were inferior and thus incapable of contributing in politics, women needed to rely on the few sympathetic men who could present their case for them (Johnson, 2006; Sensoy &

DiAngelo, 2012). Although White women were able to access this right, it was men who determined whether or not they were successful as politicians. Men held (and continue to hold) institutional control because all major social institutions continue to be organized and run by men, affording women little say in the way such institutions are organized.

Ideological domination further explicates institutional control. Ideological domination refers to the social processes by which dominant values and ideas of a society are reinforced and disseminated through social institutions (Johnson, 2006; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Dominant values rationalize the 'othering' of social groups by their continuous reinforcement through such social institutions that sustain the belief that socially constructed roles and values of certain groups are natural and unchangeable (Prilleltensky, 2003; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Ideological domination is illustrated by the struggle faced by people who are disabled. Because much of the social world has been and continues to be constructed by people who are able-bodied, the needs of people who are disabled are often unaccounted for, as their needs are often not heard (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). For example, the inaccessibility of various buildings and sidewalks inhibits the movement of those in wheelchairs, potentially restricting employment opportunities where people who are disabled could voice their concerns and needs. Using the example of racism, ideological domination means that Whites as a social group present themselves as the racial norm for humanity and dictate the perceived norm for race and in so doing those who are outside of the group "White" are substandard as human (DiAngelo, 2010). Because of this binary, the values and interests are upheld and perpetuated by Whites. For example, media often portrays white people in television, movies, magazines, and subsequent advertising, minimizing the interests, values, and needs of non-White people. Such an

imbalanced portrayal of one social group implicitly denies value to people who are not viewed as White.

Similar to the ideological domination of oppression, cultural domination refers to the norms of culture, the often unspoken and unconscious rules that are embedded in all dimensions of culture (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). For example, the Roman Catholic Church conveys messages pertaining to unbalanced value between men and women, namely that men hold more power, and has successfully kept women out of powerful positions within the Catholic Church, from Pope to clergy, for centuries. This example illustrates the four criteria of oppression, that oppression is historical, ideological, institutional, and cultural (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

The binary of men/women is one form of oppression among many that describe social groups and categories, and emphasize social stratification, that is, the assigning of unequal value to social groups (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). The group with the higher social value is dominant, having more power and access to resources in society than their counterpart, the minoritized group, which has less social value (Prilleltensky, 2003). Gender-based oppression is upheld by institutional control, ideological domination, and cultural domination, both historically and presently. Oppression against women in terms of the jobs they are able to acquire and their positioning within these jobs largely remains controlled by men. Typically, men hold powerful positions in all major social institutions granting men rights to create and uphold rules and laws according to their interests. Male superiority is therefore rationalized and reinforced through such institutions as government, economics, and media (Tuana, 1993). Male centeredness is often referred to as androcentrism (Tuana, 1993), meaning that males are accepted as the norm of humans, against which all others, namely, females, are measured. In this way, females become the lesser-valued group of the binary, men/women. Institutional control, ideological domination,

and cultural domination, then, provide a standard from which people either deviate from, or accept, which is continually reinforced by social institutions that produce messages about the value of social groups.

Socialization refers to the systematic training of members of society into the norms of culture, through learning the meanings and practices that enable members to behave culturally appropriate (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). As highlighted by the above example, socialization embeds oppression into people's consciousness, thus, inequality associated with various social groups becomes difficult to recognize. As people are socialized into their hierarchal roles, injustice is perpetuated and assured (DiAngelo, 2010). Discourse refers to meaning that is communicated in all forms of language (Foucault, 1978; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Discourse includes ideology, narratives, explanations, and concepts, influencing and shaping how people think about and relate to others, therefore they inform relations of power and oppression (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). The discourses held by dominant groups about minoritized groups emphasize the interests and values of the dominant, therefore reinforcing positions in society as "normal" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

Discourses can become internalized, both for dominant and oppressed groups. Internalized dominance refers to the belief of entitlement of one's group to a higher position of power than other groups, and the subsequent perpetuation of such power inequities (Adair & Howell, 2007; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) provide a detailed discussion of internalized oppression and dominance, which I will summarize here. They argue that members of the dominant group show their internal feelings of dominance by acting out messages that they and their group are superior to those people belonging to minoritized groups. Often, individuals from the dominant groups may rationalize privilege as natural and earned,

believing that they hold power and higher social positions based on their own hard work, rather than structural benefits. For example, a White male may rationalize his privilege as being earned, believing that his career success is due solely to his persistence and personal strengths, and may view a woman who struggles to attain the same success as lacking the personal ability or drive to do so, rather than facing systemic barriers preventing her from achieving such success. Internalized oppression, on the other hand, is described by Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) as the belief that one's lower status and positioning within a society is deserved. Discourses of the dominant group perpetuate the domination of minoritized groups with their consent, due to such internalization of oppression. Oppressed social groups often internalize the belief that their group is inferior and thus deserving of a certain social category. For example, a woman may believe that a man is more qualified for a career position, despite having equal qualifications on paper. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) argue that when minoritized groups believe that social positioning is natural and fair, no force is necessary to impose the dominant ideology. For example, a minoritized individual may believe that their struggles with social institutions are a result of themselves, or their group's inadequacy, rather than institutional inequity (Bem, 2004).

Many would argue that certain forms of oppression no longer exist. For example, on the matter of gender based oppression, many would claim, including some women, that women, at least those in Western countries, have gained equal rights to men, and therefore are no longer oppressed. Adair and Howell (2007), substantiated by Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012), Bem (2004), Collins (2000), and Prilleltensky (2003), among others, argue that oppression adapts over time and groups of people resist efforts to remedy it. For example, although women were granted rights to vote and participate in political activities, there is still significant divides between positions in government held by men and women, women having much less opportunity (Bem,

2004). It is through perpetuation and acceptance of the dominant ideologies of power that

oppression is perpetuated, albeit unnoticed, by much of the dominant group. It is due to

imbalances of power, to be discussed next, that social groups are categorized into oppressed and

privileged groups.

Power. For the purposes of this thesis research, I situate my discussion of power within a

social justice framework. Even within a social justice framework, scholars' definitions of power

vary greatly. First, I begin with a conceptualization that highlights what has become known as

the standard definition of power, that is, that power involves the capability of controlling and

influencing others and is achieved through the control of resources desired by others, making

them dependent upon those who hold power (Turner, 2005). This theorization emphasizes power

in terms of dependence (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Festinger, 1950; Simon & Oakes, 2006;

Turner, 2005). That is, that power is the capability of controlling others based on access to

desired resources (Simon & Oakes, 2006). This conceptualization of power is critiqued by Simon

and Oakes (2006) and Turner (2005) who describe such a definition as wholly conflict-focused,

to the exclusion of the socialization of power relations. Specifically, Turner (2005) states that the

standard definition of power makes ambiguous "the differences between interpersonal influence

and both the power to affect the world through collective organization and action and the power

to create and direct the collective will of people" (p. 6). And so, Turner (2005) argues, the

problem with power is not solely how one group influences another, but how power (and

oppression as the flip side of power) is internalized to the point where coercive force is not

necessary in the domination of others.

Hamilton and Sharma (1996) provide a definition for social power, which refers to having authority, the agency to enforce obedience, and the assumed right to do so. Power includes domination over territories, institutions, and people, and involves control and influence over such groups (Hamilton & Sharma, 1996). My conceptualization adds to the definition from Hamilton and Sharma, as I theorize power as a component of privilege, meaning that, with power comes privilege, and with privilege comes power through domination and control. My conceptualization of power also encompasses social power as a norm, that is, that power and imbalances of power become standard in society, mirroring the view of Turner (2005) and Simon and Oakes (2006). This view is also held by Hamilton and Sharma (1996), who accept power relations as a standard from which people should conform, regardless of the visibility or invisibility of such exercised power.

Historically, such power was held by central authorities, such as kings, whose power over society was publicly enforced. However, Foucault describes modern power as subtle and carried by discourses (Combs & Freedman, 2012). Discourses are described by Foucault (1978) as a form of power that can become attached to strategies of control as well as to those of resistance to that control. More specifically, Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) position discourses as meanings carried through language that communicates ideology. Discourses, then, are present in all things related to social interaction, such as patterns of behaviour, attitudes, educational organization, as well as actual language (Foucault, 1978). Dominant discourses endorse the way things are done as normal, and as such, often go unnoticed for the influence they have on society, namely in the unbalanced distribution of power and privilege between social groups (Combs & Freedman, 2012).

Foucault (1978) argues that power can be challenged, that it is not fixed. In order to challenge power, social agents must first recognize and identify such power (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Due to the socialization of people within systems of power and oppression, being made aware of such imbalances can cause great distress, especially for members of privileged groups (Johnson, 2006). This may be due to fact that dominant groups have been socialized to see their positions as earned and deserved (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

Privilege. Imbalances of power between social groups results in the group with the lower power becoming oppressed, while the group with the higher power gains privilege. In the context of social relationships, privilege refers to the unearned advantages and benefits enjoyed by dominant groups at the expense of other groups, and the ability of others to access these same benefits (Bailey, 1998). Because dominant groups occupy positions of power, their members receive social and institutional advantages (Bailey, 1998; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Privilege, therefore, is not viewed as the product of luck, rather as the product of structural advantages (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012), as one receives privilege based on membership to a certain group (Bailey, 1998).

Privilege, like oppression, is dynamic, ongoing, and continually reproduced due to external, structural dimensions and internal, attitudinal dimensions (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Structural privilege refers to the unearned advantages that the dominant group receives because the social world was designed with the dominant group's needs and values in mind (McIntosh, 1990). Thus, the integration of the dominant group norms into the structure of society allows oppression to operate on multiple levels and at all times, resulting in consistent unearned privilege, regardless of the intentions of the people within that society (Sensoy & DiAngelo,

2012). "Normal" and "abnormal" are constructs that are shaped by the dominant group, and these constructions are used to determine which groups receive privilege and which do not (Johnson, 2006; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Thus, people are continually socialized into thinking that some groups are superior to others, and these messages are reinforced through language, structures, and systems of society (for example, "regular" classrooms versus "special education" classrooms) (Johnson, 2006). Specifically, language has been utilized to convey messages about the humanity of certain social groups. Using first-person language acknowledges that before a person has a specific condition, they are human, as opposed to condition-first language, which suggests that due to having a certain condition, a person becomes less human. For instance, *a person with diabetes* conveys that the individual is human first, versus *a diabetic person,* in which the persons' condition is emphasized. Thus, the way language is constructed sends messages about what is considered to be normal and abnormal, consequently, what is superior and inferior. Discourse shapes these ideas as appearing to be "natural" and "normal," thus beyond question, rather than constructed through ideological domination.

Advantages and benefits afforded to able-bodied people highlight the external, structural nature of privilege. Because many people holding powerful positions are able-bodied, the experiences of people who are not able-bodied are seldom heard. Because dominant groups are often segregated from minoritized groups, and they do not feel or experience oppression, the privilege they hold is difficult to see despite being quite evident among members of minoritized groups. Because dominant groups cannot identify with the experiences of minoritized groups, it is easy to devalue their experiences of oppression (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

In addition to external, structural dimensions of privilege, there are also internal, attitudinal dimensions to privilege. Attitudinal dimensions of privilege refer to the messages

disseminated through dominant ideologies of a society that justify the imbalance of power and subsequently the provision of privilege and oppression (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Beliefs that perpetuate privilege and oppression include: believing in one's right to their position, sustaining that social injustice is a thing of the past and that everyone has equal opportunity to succeed; claiming that individualism is responsible for these imbalances, believing that privilege is based on individual strengths and weaknesses, regardless of group membership; and presuming that it is human nature to have a hierarchy among social groups (DiAngelo, 2010). Such ideologies rationalize superiority and inferiority among social groups and lead members of the dominant group to internalize such superiority. Internalized superiority stemming from privilege leads people to believe that members belonging to dominant groups have more value than others, are qualified to speak on behalf of minoritized groups, and can maintain ignorance of other groups and an unwillingness to educate themselves about minoritized groups' experiences without consequence (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

Equity. Falk, Hampton, Hodgkinson, Parker, and Rorris (1993) provide a definition of equity that is consistent with my own, which is that equity as a practice provides people with what they need, rather than focusing on providing equal access to fulfilling such needs. This definition acknowledges that positionality of certain social groups influences one's power to access resources within society. Falk et al.'s definition is as follows:

> Equity derives from a concept of social justice. It represents a belief that there are
> some things which people should have, that there are basic needs that should be
> fulfilled, that burdens and rewards should not be spread too divergently across the

community, and that policy should be directed with impartiality, fairness and

justice towards these ends (1993, p. 2).

A key distinction needs to be made between equity and equality. In general, equality

refers to equality of opportunity, while equity refers to enhanced access to resources for

marginalized groups that result in *equality of outcome* (DiAngelo, 2010). The false dichotomy of

the liberal and conservative ideologies when attributed to the purpose of education can be used to

illuminate the differences between these two concepts. This discussion is meant to expose how

conceptualizations of equality actually neglect to acknowledge social difference as a

consequence of imbalanced power, privilege, and oppression.

Bierlein (1993) describes the two ideologies that govern the role of education in Western

societies, namely, conservative and liberal. Those who subscribe to the former argue for limited

governmental control of schools and school boards, in order to maximize individual choices

(Bierlein, 1993). From this vantage point, the primary goals of education are to achieve academic

success and inoculate western values in students as efficiently as possible (Bierlein, 1993;

Dearden, 1984). The latter and opposing view of education described by Bierlein is a liberal

ideology, which posits that the goal of education is to promote equality for all through education

that is highly controlled by government. A liberal ideology acknowledges that education is

highly political and plays an important role in preparing students to participate in the secular,

political process (Dearden, 1984). Thus, the liberal ideology aims to prepare students to actively

participate in society upon completion of formal education.

When considering the two opposing ideologies for their roles in addressing social justice

issues in education, it appears that the liberal framework is more beneficial for students as it

emphasizes equality and inclusion for all. However, despite widespread thought that equality for

all addresses social inequities, some scholars explain otherwise. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) for example, cite a shift from the emergence of liberalism to the rejection of it, at least by some educational theorists, due to problematic assumptions of the definition of fairness. Fairness, then, is viewed as providing people with equal opportunities, such as employment or education. Equal opportunity of education for all maintains that as long as students are all provided the same educational experiences, they will have the same potential to succeed academically (Bierlein, 1993; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). The corollary is that, if they fail, they have no one to blame but themselves. Individual responsibility is a factor, but not to the exclusion of the systemic privileging of some groups and the marginalization of others. Equal opportunity is further explained by Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) as an attitudinal dimension of privilege, where those promoting equal opportunity believe that injustice is in the past, illuminating the tendency of the dominant group to dismiss the experiences of oppression of minoritized groups. The shift in ideology that people have equal opportunity to make decisions that impact their own fate is a tool to maintain marginalization of oppressed groups.

Therefore, equality and equity are distinct discursive and ideological lenses through which to consider and conceptualize the notion of opportunity. Whereas equality would maintain that an equal starting point is sufficient for all people to achieve material success and upward mobility, equity would maintain that, due to an unequal distribution of social power and privilege, some groups face oppression that inhibits their autonomy, regardless of their perceived potential. Autonomy, as touched upon in earlier discussion, refers to the notion that oppressed people tend to be unable to live their lives according to their own life plans, without the freedom afforded others (Zutlevics, 2002), hence the dichotomy of privileged and oppressed social groups

is at the heart of understanding inequity among social groups, in an attempt to lessen such inequity.

       The intersection of social justice concepts in the context of education. The concepts presented above—oppression, power, privilege, equity, and inequity—cannot be conceived in isolation, as they are all interconnected and influenced by each other. Therefore, further analysis of these concepts and how they connect and work in relation to one another is required to provide a comprehensive understanding of social justice. Although oppression, power, privilege and subsequent inequities are present in and perpetuated by all major social institutions, Freire (1968) argues that the route of oppression lies in the banking model of education; the notion that students are empty vessels needing teachers to make deposits of knowledge into them. In this approach to education, the relationship between teachers and learners is one of imbalanced power, resulting in the dominance of one group and the oppression of the other. Freire (1968) argues for reformation of education that moves away from a unidirectional perspective of education where one group (for example, teachers) holds an unequal amount of power over another group (for example, students). Freire's focus of the duality between oppressors and the oppressed is critiqued by Taylor (1993) who critiques Freire's lack of engagement with topics of "power and knowledge, teaching and learning, schooling and society" (p. 53). According to Taylor, education is situated in the context of greater social and political systems, namely, governmental institutions and uncontested discourses that govern the provision and implementation of education and educational policy. Thus, discussion of dominant discourses controlling the provision of education are necessary to further one's understanding of social justice concepts such as oppression, power, privilege, and equity.

Discourses, as stated earlier, influence all aspects of education, including the defining of the purpose and role of education in society, what is presented in (and left out of) the curriculum, the accessibility and emphasis of certain topics, and how they are taught and received by students (Banks, 1996; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). For example, many schools still neglect to teach about the variety of cultures of the students in their schools, instead, focusing on Eurocentric values and cultural experiences. This is a social justice issue because it implicitly teaches that one perspective, namely, that of the dominant culture, is the only one of importance, devaluing the experiences, values, and interests of other cultures. Although some of these educational practices are changing to become more equitable and inclusive, dominant ideologies are continually shaping education.

An understanding of how oppression, power, privilege, and inequity are present in, and perpetuated by, standard education systems can be achieved through an examination of how power of knowledge flows in education. Power circulates through knowledge, including how it is constructed, validated, and taught (Freire, 1968; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) argue that there are two forms of knowledge to consider when examining inequities within education, which I will summarize here. The first is knowledge about schools, and the second is knowledge within schools. The first, knowledge about schools, refers to cultural capital. That is, what one knows and understands about how schools as institutions work, including the role of administration and teachers and how to access assistance for students. Knowledge about schools is important for assisting children with getting through school. For example, Indigenous parents may have difficulty helping their children navigate or challenge schools if their children are treated unfairly. Thus, the concept of equality in education on the surface seems beneficial, especially to those holding privilege, but equality of treatment neglects

to account for the experiences of oppressed groups that dictate their successes or failures in public education. Equality of treatment, then, perpetuates inequality of outcome.

The second, knowledge within schools, refers to behaviour and conformity, how learning is defined, tested, measured, what is learned, and what is not learned. Knowledge within schools mirrors social grouping and hierarchy in society, often with those of the dominant group achieving success while minoritized groups may struggle for this same success. This represents how norms are constructed to "other" groups of people who do not fit the standard for which schools were created. The construction of knowledge, in turn, presents varied opportunities later in life by communicating to students what place and position they hold in society, by presenting certain tracks, preparing students to become either managers or those who are managed (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). A central component to note is that education prepares us for predetermined roles based on the social categories we belong to, these having been constructed in the dominant ideology. Societal norms (dominant ideologies) are sustained by schools, implicitly teaching that inequity between social groups is natural, when in reality, it is socially constructed. In this way, schools create and perpetuate their own systems of inequity reflective of wider, social inequities. Consequently, the presence of social justice in education has been, and continues to be, influenced by discourses of power, privilege, and oppression in greater society, and teacher education programs are not impervious to such domination.

Social justice concepts and teacher education. Teacher education programs provide a potentially rich venue by which pre-service teachers could learn about systemic sources of inequity that sustain oppression, privilege, power, and inequity. Although most teacher education programs incorporate education about social justice concepts and practices, and despite

governing bodies mandating that social justice be addressed in schools, Carr (2008) found that many pre-service teachers deem social justice courses to be less central to their learning than courses pertaining to the science of teaching.

This is not surprising when considering that teacher education programs aim to equip pre-service teachers with skills and knowledge that allows them to teach students in school systems. The problem with focusing on this aim is that it does not necessarily equip pre-service teachers with the skills necessary to address social justice and equity issues (Marvin & Smith-Maddox, 2007). Further, in their overview of the design of teacher education programs, Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, and Shulman (2005) found that pedagogies applied to teacher education programs tend to focus on helping new teachers develop and practice skills they will use in the classroom, make sound decisions in the face of uncertainty, and to become innovative and adaptive learners. With a lack of clear focus to raising awareness to societal inequities that impact the lives of students, it is not surprising that many teacher candidates maintain "problematic beliefs about equity education" (Levine-Rasky, 1998, p. 94). Such beliefs tend to result from various factors, including ineffective teaching on social justice, tensions and discrepancies between theory and practice, and between intersecting institutions of power, namely faculties of education and public school systems.

Curriculum documents of the Ontario Ministry of Education support a social justice mandate to achieve equitable and inclusive education, for example, *Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* (2009), the *Full-Day Early Learning – Kindergarten Program* (2010/2011), and the *Ontario Curriculum Grade 1-8: Language* (2006). Many teacher education programs also have policy highlighting the need for pre-service teachers to become aware of systematic sources of inequity and address them openly in schools (James, 1997; Solomon, 1998;

& Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1996). Some education systems have even implemented policies in an attempt to increase awareness of social justice issues and influence social change. For example, the Toronto District School board has implemented a policy named, *The Social Justice Action Plan*, in which the vision statement is: "for all schools in the Toronto District School Board to have an opportunity to learn about local and global issues and to participate in actions that affect positive change" (2010, p. 4). The initiative involves the implementation of school courses related to social justice issues. Despite an attempt by some boards to increase student and teacher awareness of social justice issues, there continues to be a lack of discussion about social justice, equity, power, and oppression in teacher education programs (Allen, 2008). When considering teacher education programs that do cover these topics, the majority of pre-service teachers belonging to dominant social groups (for example, those who are White and middle-class) did not consider social justice, power, and oppression issues to be meaningful (Levine-Rasky, 1998; Marvin & Smith-Maddox, 2007). Such a lack of engagement can lead pre-service teachers to avoid explicit teaching of controversial issues, for example, issues of power and oppression in relation to race or gender (Levine-Rasky, 1998).

Schmidt, Change, Carolan-Silva, and Lockhart (2012) found that, instead of fostering a critical lens, teacher education programs tend to promote tolerance and acceptance through anti-oppression curricula. Such a framework is consistent with the problematic conceptualization of equality (that equal opportunity is sufficient for promoting equity) held by many, and neglects to acknowledge oppression and power as systemic, institutionalized, and resistant of change. Carr (2008) also found that many teachers believe in a clear and easy formula to engage in issues of social justice (for example, including books about other cultures or starting anti-bullying clubs), rather than as an ongoing, critical and self-reflective process. For some pre-service teachers, the

type of work needed to implement a social justice framework comes with personal risk, and teacher education programs do not adequately prepare them to connect theory to practice once they enter the workforce (Allen, 2008).

Many pre-service teachers are taught about social justice, but many are ineffective at implementing their knowledge within classroom and school contexts (Anderson & Szabo, 2007; Carr, 2008). This failure is further amplified by the tensions pre-service teachers typically face when moving from teacher education classrooms to schools. Despite their learning about social justice issues in teacher education programs, once pre-service teachers enter schools, many face barriers that inhibit their abilities to act as agents of change (Allen, 2008). These include: resistance from teacher mentors, school administration, an overcrowded curriculum, and a traditional education that perpetuates the systemic inequities reflected in the greater society (Allen, 2008; Joshee, 2007). I would add that a major barrier to pre-service teachers' ability to act as agents of social change stem from inadequate knowledge of social justice concepts as discussed earlier: oppression, power, privilege, and equity. Thus, an important aspect lacking in teacher education is preparing pre-service teachers with the knowledge and skills they need in order to navigate the tensions and contradictions they may encounter when attempting to engage in social justice teachings (Allen, 2008).

Pre-service teacher positionality. In the Ontario education system, students are rarely taught about the experiences of minoritized groups, a dilemma that further perpetuates inequities. When they are taught about the experiences of minoritized groups, teachings are often associated with mainstream knowledge of the group, pertaining to dress, food, and language (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Such teachings neglect engagement with issues of power and oppression that

maintain social groups in dominant or oppressed positions. For example, Ontario's *Canadian and World Studies* curriculum document states that students will "analyse how significant events, individuals, and groups, including Aboriginal peoples, Quebecois, and immigrants, contributed to the development of identity, citizenship, and heritage in Canada between 1945 and 1982" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 109). Although the *Canadian and World Studies* document includes such topics, including the history of Aboriginal people, it neglects acknowledgment of contemporary and continued oppression faced by Indigenous groups. To recognize oppression people must engage in questioning the very system that benefits those of the dominant group (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Bringing these issues to light, however, often causes distress, avoidance, and defensiveness in dominant group members, and such resistance to learning about and accepting these concepts often leads teachers to avoid taking these issues up in the classroom.

Positionality is defined as one's position in relation to others on the basis of social categories (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). These include (but are not limited to) race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and religion, all of which collectively shape one's understanding and experience of the social world. Acknowledging positionality is a crucial aspect when attempting to engage in social justice education as it involves recognizing that knowledge is socially constructed and dependent on the intersection of cultural values, beliefs, and experiences (Banks, 1996; Johnson, 2006; Marvin & Smith-Maddox, 2007). Examining one's positionality is crucial to developing social justice understanding because it has the potential to connect theory of social justice to the practice of social justice (Marvin & Smith-Maddox, 2007; Pinnegar, Mangelson, Reed, & Groves, 2011). Without dominant groups' engagement with concepts of oppression and privilege, such groups are unable to see their position within society, and so, they unwittingly

perpetuate their power. Awareness of positionality is essential for pre-service teachers as their positionality often varies greatly with those of the students they teach (Allen, 2008).

In order for pre-service teachers to challenge systems of power that create and maintain oppressions, they need to not only be made aware of the varying life experiences of others (McIntosh, 1990), they must also engage with such concepts as discussed above: oppression, power, privilege, and equity, and how these have shaped their own lives. Such critical reflection can enhance learning of the various ways inequitable practices are generated and perpetuated by education (McLaren, 2007). For educators, introspection on positionality can be a difficult and painful process, however, it can drastically enhance sensitivity to the ways that students experience teaching and learning and the ways teachers unwittingly perpetuate domination in the classroom (Carr, 2008). The reformation of beliefs and attitudes based on introspection on the part of pre-service teachers can be a difficult and painful process as it requires that pre-service teachers examine their social positioning, associated power and privilege, educational upbringing, and subsequently their roles and responsibilities as teachers (Jakubowski & Visano, 2002).

There are many issues associated with promoting equitable, socially just education. King (1991) describes teacher education programs as a fundamental problem in the quest for education with a social justice framework. This is because many teacher education programs fail in their attempt to provide teachers with critical insight into their roles and responsibilities as educators, which is, itself, highly contested terrain (Kirk, 1986; Owuor & Sleeter, 2011). Despite how some teacher education programs attempt to prepare students with the skills necessary to address issues of social justice, once in schools, many pre-service teachers experience great pressure to maintain the status quo (Kugelmass, 2000). Kose and Lim (2010) support this notion, critiquing

the effectiveness of educational practices that aim to provide practical and transformative content and rely on content-based professional learning, rather than engaging in critical learning of societal systems that produce and maintain inequities. With a focus on academic achievement, many teachers neglect to address issues of social justice and equity, avoiding engagement in discussions that could be deemed controversial.

Contributions to Existing Literature

The literature review above highlights the major theories associated with social justice and social justice in education, namely, oppression, power, privilege, and equity. Teacher education institutions have been notoriously unsuccessful in producing teachers who are capable of critically addressing social justice issues in their work as educators, due to pre-service teachers' lack of engagement with systems of power and oppression, which subsequently perpetuates social injustices. Examination of such topics in relation to pre-service teachers' positionality is essential for pre-service teacher understanding of social inequities that result from unequal power and privilege between dominant and oppressed groups in contemporary society.

My thesis research explores how pre-service teachers understand social justice concepts such as oppression, power, privilege, and equity as these concepts relate to each other and within an educational context. Using a grounded theory approach, my work contributes to the current understanding of social justice in education as it relates to knowledge, power, privilege, responsibility, and identity among pre-service teachers. I draw on the knowledge and experiences of pre-service teachers in the three streams of the Bachelor of Education program (Primary/Junior, Junior/Intermediate, and Intermediate/Senior). Specifically, I uncover pre-service teachers' understandings of social justice and social justice education, including potential implications for their future pedagogy. I build on the appeals of some key previous work. For

instance, in her study of first and second year teachers' conceptions and enactment of social justice curriculum, Agarwal (2008) highlighted a need for a deeper understanding of teachers' conceptions of social justice. Taking up this challenge, my research utilized multiple levels of analysis and interpretation of the data in order to provide insight into pre-service teachers' understandings of social justice as they began their teacher education program.

In Chapter Two, the concepts of oppression, power, privilege, and equity, and the intersections of them were discussed from the vantage point of key theorists. These concepts were then connected to issues in education and teacher education. Further, the related concept of positionality was introduced. In examining literature pertaining to social justice and education, areas where research is lacking were found and are discussed in the Contributions to Existing Literature section, and were used to inform the research project. The literature review and subsequent gaps in the research were used to inform the methodology and methods of this project, which is the terrain of the next chapter.

Chapter Three: "Tools for Progress": Methodology, Methods, and Data Analysis

In this chapter, I discuss the methodology that guided this research: grounded theory. In what follows, I present an overview of grounded theory in current and historical contexts, in addition to my own interpretation and subsequent use of grounded theory. Included is a discussion of key aspects of grounded theory, including the use of a scholarly review, conceptual analysis and coding, theoretical sampling, memo-writing, and theoretical saturation. I then discuss the methods and data collection techniques and processes used in this study, namely, open-ended surveys, and the use of initial and secondary data collection stages. Finally, I discuss participant demographics, data analysis, and ethical concerns and limitations.

The focus of this research is to investigate how pre-service teachers understand social justice, concepts related to social justice, and their perceptions of how it applies to teaching practice upon entry into their teacher education program. Such a focus engages with the fact that socially constructed roles, privileges, and oppressions are present in and perpetuated by educational systems. For the purposes of this study, my emphasis is placed upon the cognition and experiences of pre-service teachers, specifically their understanding of social justice, as this understanding has been influenced by factors such as their individual experiences and their social relations (Jacob, 1992).

In examining how pre-service teachers understand concepts such as social justice and exploring how these conceptions inform their pedagogical perspectives, I utilize a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory derives from Glaser and Strauss (1967) but, after the completion of their publication of *The Discovery of Grounded Theory,* the two theorists diverged on their definitions of grounded theory as they apply to coding processes (Birks & Mills, 2011; Kelle, 2005). Glaser maintains that grounded theorists should make use of

coding families while coding data (1992). He discusses two forms of codes to be utilized:

substantive codes (developing a first round of codes that relate to empirical substances of the

data) and theoretical codes (codes used to related substantive codes to each other in order to form

a theory). With coding families, Glaser aims to guide researchers in their quest for theoretical

sensitivity (Kelle, 2005).

The divergent approach to grounded theory was prescribed by Strauss (1987) who

describes a less complex way for beginner researchers to code data (Kelle, 2005). Strauss and

Corbin (1990) deepen Strauss's call for a more structured coding process, employing a coding

paradigm to structure data. The paradigm can assist in the axial coding process, that is, "the

analysis done around one category at a time" (Strauss, 1987, p. 32).

Glaser and Strauss both draw on the notion that all research processes require a

theoretical framework (Kelle, 2005). However, Glaser (1992) provides terms to assist in the

coding process while Strauss (1990) provides a framework for generating codes. Glaser (1998)

critiques Strauss and Corbin's development of grounded theory, claiming that a coding paradigm

forces findings, rather than allowing them to emerge from the findings. Glaser also states that a

"true" grounded theory approach does not include research questions or a review of the literature,

claiming that these techniques contaminate the research by inhibiting the researcher's ability to

formulate categories and theories (1992).

A widely contested aspect of grounded theory is that the key original theorists, Glaser

and Strauss, neglected to write about grounded theory as a methodology and, instead,

concentrated on the methods associated with a grounded theory approach (Birks & Mills, 2011).

Corbin and Strauss (2008) began adding literature pertaining to philosophical frameworks, such

as symbolic interactionism, from which grounded theory should be based. Glaser (2005) resists

the assumption and addition of philosophical frameworks, on grounds that adopting these may

limit the potential of grounded theory. Congruent with established scholars in the field of

grounded theory, I employ grounded theory as a set of methods guiding the research process

(Birks & Mills, 2011; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

Although somewhat contested as a method, the overriding objective of grounded theory,

and the definition to be used in this research project, is to create emergent theories from the data

that account for the data (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz & Bryant, 2008; Glaser, 1998; Kennedy &

Lingard, 2006; Smith, 2010). Grounded theory is open-ended and flexible in nature, allowing for

emergent conceptual analysis (Charmaz, 2006) and as such, maintains interplay between

induction and deduction (McGee, Marland, & Atkinson, 2007). It does not seek to test a

hypothesis (Kennedy & Lingard, 2006). Rather, it aims to generate new theory (McGee et al.,

2007).

Grounded theory is critiqued for its oversimplification of meaning and relationships

between data, its dependence on inductive methods that could produce inappropriate claims, and

emphasizing process over interpretation of data (such as Thomas & James, 2006). Layder (1998)

critiques grounded theory for highlighting findings that are already evident, neglecting to probe

deeper structural systems influencing the meaning attached to findings. Another critique,

outlined by Haig (1995) is that grounded theory approaches are inappropriate for qualitative

reasoning as the induction involved in the data analysis stage involves little more than

inferencing potential meaning, thus, lacking in rigour. Finally, a substantial argument against the

use of grounded theory is the apparent focus on the process of data collection and analysis

(methods) as privileged over the data itself (Robrecht, 1995).

Emergence, an integral aspect of grounded theory, considers the past, is grounded in the present, and looks towards a future (Charmaz, 2006). Emergent methods acknowledge that the empirical world includes events that continually unfold, and seeks to pursue directions of inquiry that may be unanticipated (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As such, grounded theory is suitable for studying dynamic phenomena and processes, such as knowledge, perspective, and experience (Charmaz & Bryant, 2008). Grounded theory involves discovering theories and categories that emerge from data analysis, and checking these categories through multiple levels of hypothetical and inductive analysis and reasoning (Charmaz, 2006). Continually referring back to the data as a process of deductive reasoning ensures that the researchers emerging theories, categories and codes are grounding in the data (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Through successive data collection and analysis phases, refinements to the categories are made, each being informed by the other (Birks & Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2006).

Grounded theory is appropriate for the studying of perspective as it provides the opportunity to examine individual, subjective knowledge and experience, and allows for the examination of commonalities among research participants (Charmaz, 2006). Collecting data from multiple perspectives allows similarities and disparities to emerge.

Processes involved in grounded theory include (but are not limited to) four essential practices as defined by Birks and Mills (2011) and Charmaz (2006), among others. The first is framing comparative conceptual analysis of data collection and coding, including comparing participant responses against emerging codes. The second is memo-writing throughout data collection, analysis, and writing (for example, maintaining notes on my thoughts pertaining to participant responses and subsequent codes). The third is theoretical sampling, which refers to collecting additional data from participants based on their initial survey responses in an attempt

to reach theoretical saturation. Finally, grounded theory involves researcher self-examination throughout the research process.

          Scholarly review concurrent with grounded theory. A contested aspect of grounded theory (as mentioned above) involves the use of a literature review prior to undertaking the research process. Some argue that writing a literature review defeats the purpose of grounded theory, as it establishes the array of scholarship pertaining to the topic of study (Glaser with the assistance of Holton, 2004). The risk of this, according to Glaser, is that the themes emerging from the data may be influenced by the researchers' knowledge of what has already been determined, and subsequently prevents the researcher from remaining open to new categories that may emerge from the data.

        For the purposes of this research project, I align with the counter argument of Lempert (2007), who deviates from the critique of creating a literature review prior to engaging in the research process. Lempert, supported by Christiansen (2011), argues that, in order for a researcher to enter and participate in a field of study competently, the researcher must understand and acknowledge the scholarship that already exists on the topic. He argues that, without observing current scholarship on the topic to be explored, the researcher may claim to produce findings deriving from an innovative design in areas in which a literary basis is already established, due to researcher ignorance of the topic (Lempert, 2007). A literature review situates the researcher within current parameters of scholarship, but does not define the research (Christiansen, 2011; Lempert, 2007). Drawing from Lempert's perspective, I utilized a review of the literature pertaining to the scholarship of social justice, social justice education, and pre-service teachers' knowledge of and experiences with these concepts. Utilizing a literature review

aided in achieving theoretical sensitivity, that is, relating already established models of theory to the theory generated from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Therefore, in order to maintain theoretical sensitivity, my literature review situated "the research outcome within the main body of relevant literature" (Christiansen, 2011, p. 21).

Conceptual analysis and coding. Unlike other qualitative methodologies, grounded theory favours information that is derived from the process of inquiry and the development of codes and categories, rather than the outcome of analysis (Charmaz, 2006). In this way, grounded theory questions the processes associated with experiences, rather than answers to questions asking "whether or not" or "how much" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 74-75). A key aspect distinct to grounded theory is the constant moving back and forth between data collection and data analysis allowing for shifting focus on emergent theories (Maxwell, 2005). Researchers aim to report on emerging findings revealed in the initial data set, and after rechecking the hypothesis through further collecting data from key informants (Charmaz, 2006), the researcher determines the most likely interpretation of the data (Reichertz, 2007).

Grounded theory research begins with inductive reasoning and moves into abductive reasoning as empirical findings emerge for the researcher (Charmaz, 2006). Abduction is the process of allowing for plausible interpretation of empirical findings and the development of theories that might account for them (Dei, 2004; Reichertz, 2007).

In grounded theory, coding includes two phases, initial coding and focused coding (Charmaz, 2006). Initial coding involves reading of the data in order to discern commonalities and exceptionalities within and between participant responses, whereas focused coding requires analyzing and organizing the collected data into themes and categories (Birks & Mills, 2011).

For the purposes of this project, data was coded for themes and topics, by comparing word-by-word, line-by-line, and paragraph-by-paragraph (Charmaz, 2006). Coding was done with gerunds, which are noun forms of verbs (for example, feel from feeling, need from needing, and reveal from revealing). These help to define what is happening in a fragment of data (Birks & Mills, 2011; Charmaz & Bryant, 2008). After codes were made from the initial phase, I sorted the data according to selected codes, determining which codes best approached my topic of research, and these became the theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2006). Finally, the categories were tested against the data in order to discern which codes fit, and to further refine the categories (Charmaz, 2006). This was achieved by reviewing the data used to create codes to ensure the codes adequately reflected the data, and that the data used supported the construction of such codes. Codes that were found to have limited data supporting them were then refined or rejected based on the data and on the research objectives for this project.

Theoretical sampling. In grounded theory, theoretical sampling refers to the sampling done after the initial data collection stage (Charmaz, 2006). That is, once the initial data has been collected, and categories and codes have been defined, the researcher reaches out to the participant group to further deepen the established categories and broaden their understanding of a particular theme (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Theoretical sampling distinguishes grounded theory from other forms of qualitative research as it allows researchers to go back into the field in which data was first collected in order to find answers to questions that the initial data set uncovered (Charmaz, 2006).

Memo writing. In grounded theory, memo-writing, a task completed by the researcher, occurs between the stages of data collection and writing a paper draft. Memo writing is about capturing ideas in process and in progress (Birks & Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2006), that is, throughout the research project. Continual memo-writing on the same category traces its development as the researcher gathers more data to illuminate the category (Charmaz, 2006). Memos provide the opportunity for researchers to learn about the data as they collect and analyze it, as opposed to simply summarizing the data (Birks & Mills, 2011). Charmaz (2006) states that researchers employing a grounded theory should write memos at any time during the research process in which they have an idea, and that this prompts the researcher to go beyond description and into analysis.

Theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation refers to the point in the data collection process when the retrieval of more data "sheds no further light on the properties of a theoretical category" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 167). The concept of theoretical saturation is a key goal in grounded theory and in qualitative research in general, however, gathering enough data to claim theoretical saturation of a category requires that massive amounts of data are collected (Charmaz, 2006), a time consuming and intensive process.

Despite having many prescribed methods for employing grounded theory, the methods and use of methods are adaptable and flexible according to each emerging study (Charmaz, 2006).

Methods and Data Collection

This research employed two data collection methods. The purpose for utilizing two collection methods derived from the principal of theoretical saturation, described above. As themes from initial surveys surfaces, I was able to further my understanding of participant responses through

the secondary data collection method. The initial source of data was acquired through qualitative

surveys administered online and from those, secondary surveys were created and tailored to

individual responses and administered via email. The secondary surveys were determined

according to the emerging themes of the initial data collection phase.

Open-ended surveys. Surveys allow for the descriptive sharing of pre-service teachers'

understandings of social justice as it applies to education, in order to identify how their past

experiences shape their understanding, in addition to how their understanding may shape their

future pedagogical practices in relation to social justice teaching.

Open-ended surveys provide the opportunity to explore historical, cultural, and

ideological lines of power that impact the individual understandings of, and experiences with,

social justice in education among pre-service teachers (Fink, 2003). Qualitative survey studies

explore the diversity of understandings and experiences within a given population, based on

semi-structured interviews with members selected from that population (Jansen, 2010). In

exploring the understandings of pre-service teachers as they begin the social process of teacher

education in relation to social justice teaching, this research approach allowed pre-service

teachers the opportunity to share their understandings and real-world experiences by collecting

subjective, individual descriptions.

Initial and secondary data collection stages. In order to collect information on pre-

service teachers' perceptions and understandings, I administered online, open-ended surveys to

pre-service teacher candidates as they began their teacher education programs. The population of

interest in this study is pre-service teachers (consecutive, Bachelor of Education students) in Ontario.

After acquiring approval to collect data with human subjects from the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board, I asked the Faculty of Undergraduate Studies administration to forward an initial participant email (See Appendix A) to all students in the 2013/2014 Professional Year Bachelor of Education program at Lakehead University, including students from the three divisions of pre-service teachers: Primary/Junior, Junior/Intermediate, and Intermediate/Senior streams. This email provided information about the research project and informed potential participants that an official survey email (See Appendix B) would be sent with more information as well as the link to the survey (See Appendix D) which was created using SurveyMonkey.

Upon clicking on the survey link, students wishing to participate were provided with information regarding informed consent to participate in the project, including their rights as research participants and how the information they shared would be used. I communicated to participants, through the online consent form, that their participation in the project, as well as all data provided by them, would remain confidential. I created a list of participant emails, which were paired with random pseudonyms that I used when collecting, storing, and reporting on data. As the pseudonyms were linked to participant emails, I was able to follow-up with participants as I engaged in secondary data collection and subsequent analysis. Participants were asked to accept or decline their involvement in the study after reading the informed consent information (See Appendix C).

The open-ended survey (See Appendix D) included both closed and open-ended questions such as:

1: Demographic questions:

- *Age*

- *Gender*

- *Sexuality*

- *Ethnicity*

- *Religious/Spiritual affiliations*

2: Open-ended questions:

- *What is your current understanding of social justice education?*

- *Do you envision being involved in social justice issues when you become a teacher? If so, how do you think this might look?*

Participant demographics. The pool of participants consisted of fourteen Bachelor of Education students. Eight participants were female and six participants were male. Of the female participants, four were between the ages of 18 to 24, two were between the ages of 25 to 34, and two were between the ages of 35 to 44. Of the male participants, two were between the ages of 18 to 24, two were between the ages of 25 to 34, and two were between the ages of 35 to 44. Most participants self-described as 'Caucasian', with the exception of one participant listing their ethnicity as Ukrainian and Sicilian. One participant declined to answer. Most participants declared their sexuality as heterosexual, one as bisexual, one as homosexual, and three participants preferred not to disclose their sexuality.

Data analysis. Surveys were completed online via SurveyMonkey and were sent and stored electronically in my SurveyMonkey account. I used pseudonyms when extracting

responses to the survey questions and put them into one, password protected computer file. I received fourteen survey responses and of those fourteen, nine participants indicated that they were willing to be contacted in the future to answer follow-up questions based on their initial survey responses.

Analysis of qualitative surveys involves comparing and contrasting the data retrieved from each topic inquired, followed by the categorization of information according to similarities and divergences emerging from the data, for example, themes, experiences, attitudes, and behaviours (Charmaz & Bryant, 2008; Jansen, 2010). In this way, qualitative surveys aim to determine the diversity of the experience of a topic within a prescribed population and in doing so highlights meaningful variation within the population (Jansen, 2010). There are variations in the way qualitative surveys are understood and used. One of the key uses of qualitative surveys is described by Jansen (2010). In this perspective of qualitative surveys, grounded theory, theoretical sampling, and comparison are applied to several iterations of data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Jansen, 2010).

I examined the initial data set to detect patterns and regularities from participant responses and coded these according to emergent themes. The survey data was coded for themes and topics by comparing word-by-word, line-by-line, and paragraph-by-paragraph (Charmaz, 2006). Coding of the data was done by gerunds, which, as described above, are noun forms of verbs (for example, feeling: participant felt that their responsibility as an educator included providing education on social justice issues; and needing: participant believed that they needed more support from colleagues to engage in social justice issues in their work) in order to help formulate an understanding of what was happening in each fragment of data (Birks & Mills,

2011; Charmaz & Bryant, 2008). As I collected data, I coded it based on responses to each survey question.

Induction is "a type of reasoning that begins with the study of a range of individual cases and extrapolates patterns from them to form conceptual theory" (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 608). Thus, in the use of surveys with open-ended questions, the descriptive data provided by participants was analyzed to extract patterns in the formation of themes and theories. I then used these themes to move from specific observations to broader generalizations and theories (Charmaz, 2006). Connections between these themes were examined to further my understanding of pre-service teachers' perceptions of social justice within the teacher education program. In keeping with grounded theory, I used theoretical sampling after the initial data collection phase in the form of email surveys tailored to individual responses. Once initial codes and themes were generated, I approached the nine participants (who had indicated that they were willing to be contacted to answer follow-up questions), from my initial survey group via email with follow-up questions (Appendix E) to broaden my understanding of emerging themes.

Throughout the coding process, I acquired input from my thesis supervisor who provided feedback on my coding decisions. The role of my supervisor was to read through some of the data while examining the codes I had made, and to provide comments pertaining to my coding decisions (for example, my supervisor could extract meaning from a piece of data that could create a different code or theme). Throughout data collection and analysis, I maintained a journal that was used to record personal memos, notes, timelines, thoughts, and feelings that surfaced throughout the research project, especially during data collection and analysis. These memos were used to recall initial impressions of data and participants, and record my thought processes as I collected data, in order to refer to them during the data analysis and writing stages.

I interpreted the complete data set in order to capture the essence of how pre-service teachers' understand social justice as it applies to education and their future pedagogical approaches. The data was read and reread throughout the data collection and analysis phases in order to ensure that the initial themes were salient and adequately related to the research questions and objectives. Although I discerned many important themes from the data, for the purposes of this thesis, two key themes were formulated based on the survey responses: perceived professional responsibility to engage in social justice education, and a problematic understanding of social justice issues and education based on dominant discourses.

Ethical considerations and limitations. I aimed to illuminate pre-service teachers' perspectives and understandings of social justice in relation to pedagogy. Limiting factors associated with this study stemmed from researcher positionality and methods.

I was a student in the very program from which I recruited participants and drew information. At the time, I found that many of my colleagues were ill-equipped to deal with social justice issues in the classroom. My aim, then, was to explore this issue more deeply in a new cohort. Thus, in analysing and reporting on the data that resulted from the surveys, my positionality as a research and former Bachelor of Education student must be recognized and acknowledged (as described above). In order to maintain transparency of my positionality through the data analysis aspect of my research, I used member checking, that is, soliciting scholars in the field of social justice to review my data and initial codes, during the coded and categorization of the retrieved data. This consisted of feedback from my supervisor pertaining to my coding and analysis decisions.

This study relies heavily on the perspectives and experiences of pre-service teachers who provided responses concerning their understandings of social justice education via an online

survey, then again as the conceptual analysis was driven by the emergent themes. Despite the initial survey being designed to be easy to complete while taking a minimal amount of time, the participants were at the beginning stage of an intensive program, and so, responses may have been provided hastily without the participants reflecting deeply on their experiences due to time constraints.

The data in this study may also be influenced by the collection method, that is, pre-service teachers completed the surveys online. As an online survey, questions asked had the potential to be misinterpreted or misunderstood by participants. In order to address the issue of confusion in the implementation of the surveys, I communicated to participants that any issues involving the understanding of a survey question could be discussed with me. In order to ensure that my impressions of the survey responses were accurate and representative of the research participants' beliefs and experiences, I utilized follow-up questions based on responses to deepen participant voices.

The methodology described above was used in order to determine and understand how pre-service teachers understand social justice concepts and implications for their future teaching. I implemented a qualitative survey within a grounded theory framework. Such a framework allowed for the discovery of emergent themes as considered in the past, present, and future (Charmaz, 2006). Because grounded theory acknowledges that the empirical world is continually unfolding, such a methodology is appropriate for delving into human experiences with social justice issues, as power, oppression, privilege, equity, and inequity are historically contingent, and continually flowing in contemporary forms that influence all social experiences. Public schools, as well as teacher education institutions, are key hosts of social experience, especially for pre-service teachers connecting their own experiences of schooling with teachings brought to

them by teacher education programs. Thus, questioning pre-service teachers about their experiences with social justice concepts during the first half of their teacher education programs will illuminate their conceptualizations of their roles as teachers in relation to social justice.

In his book *Privilege, Power, and Difference*, Allan Johnson discusses the meaning of talking about social justice concepts, aptly stating that when people talk about ideas such as social injustice, such concepts become more significant just by virtue of talking about them (2006). Thus, a major rationale for the use of grounded theory and methods such as qualitative interviews is the ability of pre-service teachers to bring to light their own understandings of social justice issues. Although the primary goal in this work is to expose current understandings of such issues of pre-service teachers, the methodology provides participants the opportunity to reflect on and discuss their own experiences. Such practice has the potential to raise in participants a deeper awareness of the impact their teachings have on their students, making social justice issues in education, as Johnson (2006) puts it, more significant in their future roles as educators.

In conclusion, I detailed above the methodology that guided this research, namely, grounded theory. Additionally, the methods, data collection, and data analysis processes used in this project were described. Finally, participant demographics, ethical concerns, and limitations associated with this project were discussed, contextualizing the use of grounded theory and subsequent methods within this particular project. The next chapter discusses the research outcomes and findings from my analysis based on grounded theory methodology.

Chapter Four: "Results of Progress": Key Findings

In what follows, I provide a brief overview of the survey used to collect participant responses, and examine the findings derived from the survey, including the emergent themes, which are: perceived moral responsibility to engage in social justice education, and discourses of individualism and tolerance that shape understandings of social justice and social justice education. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the findings, reiterating participants' understandings of social justice and social justice education, and highlight problematic beliefs held by pre-service teachers.

In order to collect data on participant understandings of social justice issues, including their perceptions of their roles as educators in relation to social justice, I administered qualitative, online surveys via SurveyMonkey. In addition to demographic questions, the surveys included the following open-ended questions:

1. *What is your current understanding of social justice education?*

2. *What do you perceive as your professional responsibilities as a teacher in relation to social justice?*

3. *Do you think social justice education matters? If so, to whom? Why?*

4. *Do you envision being involved in social justice issues when you become a teacher? If so, how do you think this might look?*

5. *Have you ever felt oppressed or privileged based on your gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, language, or socioeconomic status?*

   a. *If so, how did you deal with the experience?*

   b. *Do you think these experiences influence your understanding of social justice in education?*

Emergent Themes

In attempting to understand pre-service teachers' experiences with, and understanding of, social justice and social justice education, I analyzed responses to the above questions by comparing participants' written responses and recording and analyzing commonalities and exceptionalities of participants' responses, word-by-word, line-by-line, and paragraph-by-paragraph. I then compared themes for relationships and connections between themes. In doing so, underlying themes were formed that informed my understanding of the data. These overarching themes and subsequent themes emerged from my analysis:

1. Perceived moral responsibility to engage in social justice education.

   a. Social justice education as a moral responsibility of educators.

   b. Teachers have the power to control social justice education.

   c. Reasons behind participants' feelings of responsibility to engage in social justice education.

2. Discourses guiding a problematic understanding of social justice education.

   a. Discourse of individualism

   b. Discourse of tolerance

These themes, which I examine below, are not exclusive; rather they are intricately intertwined and connected to one another. For the purposes of conceptual clarity and future recommendations, the themes have been separated into the above categories and broken down into sub-categories.

The quotes highlighted here reflect significant and/or repetitive attitudes and experiences from the survey population. They are direct quotes and as such have not been altered in any way and I used pseudonyms instead of real names to maintain anonymity of participants. The two

themes have been chosen as they best reflect the research questions and objectives for this study

and point to recommendations for improving pre-service understanding of social justice and

social justice education within teacher education programs.

Theme 1: Perceived moral responsibility to engage in social justice education.

This theme is categorized by the overwhelming belief among my participants that teachers are

responsible for providing social justice education to their students, and the acknowledgment of

having the power to do so.

Social justice education as a moral responsibility of educators. In response to the initial

survey question: "What do you perceive as your professional responsibilities as a teacher in

relation to social justice?" while most participants termed their goals "professional" as set up in

the question, what they named (for example, safe and fair) were actually moral responsibilities

related to social justice issues as future educators. This attitude is reflected in Ellen's response:

"My professional responsibilities as teacher in relation to social justice are huge. I hope to make

my classroom inclusive and fair. I want all my students to feel as though they are represented and

that their feelings matter." Her attitude is also established by others in response to the same

question: "What do you perceive as your professional responsibilities as a teacher in relation to

social justice?". For instance, Jake said: "To make sure that your class is a safe zone for all

different backgrounds whether they come from a family rich or poor, religion, culture, sexuality

etc."

        Similarly, Daisy indicated that she

would like to be involved with social justice issues in my school but it depends on what issues my school is allowing to be attended to. I would likely be the teacher with a safe room where those feeling excluded due to race, gender, or sexuality could go to feel safe.

Participants' willingness to raise social justice issues in their classrooms could have a positive influence on their students, as most participants seem confident in their abilities to raise such issues. Because their intentions are fuelled by a moral obligation to create social change, even if such change occurs solely in their future classrooms, their students could potentially benefit from participants commitment to be social justice education, as seen in the following responses regarding their roles and responsibilities. Tyler, for instance, emphasized creating "an accepting, tolerant classroom and to keep bullying at a minimum. This is done by modelling accepting, tolerant behaviour, and by telling students not to use certain words which denigrate minorities."

Such attitudes reflect an understanding that teachers hold power in terms of what they choose to include or exclude in their teachings. Such a belief is consistent with current and historical understandings of power, namely, that those in authority (for example, teachers) hold power to impose their interests, views, beliefs, and opinions onto others (for example, students) (Foucault, 1978; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Teachers hold such power in the context of schooling and education as they are viewed as authority figures within schools. In this respect, whether they are conscious of this or not, participants such as Ellen acknowledge what Turner (2005) argues, which is that their students are dependent on them to provide access to knowledge about social justice, and also what Hamilton and Sharma (1996) indicate, which is that such power comes with the privilege to dominate and control students. Such a notion was found in

multiple participant responses to the question: "What do you perceive as your professional responsibilities as a teacher in relation to social justice?": "Teaching students moral responsibility" (Tanya), "To make sure equity is maintained in the classroom. To make sure students are aware of different social justices" (James), "To promote awareness and understanding of the diversity in society to set up the mind for tolerance and acceptance" (Elaine), "It is my place as a future teacher to make my classroom a safe place for discussion regarding social justice issues" (Daisy), and, "I believe it is my responsibility to make my students aware of social justice issues that I feel they are capable of understanding, mature enough to handle, and able to take part in initiatives"... (Kamil).

The above participants, then, seem to feel that they should use their power as teachers to be agents of social change by addressing social justice issues in their future work as educators. A willingness and responsibility to engage in social justice education shows that the above participants negotiate their positions of power within the education system by providing their students experiences in which they can learn to make, in participants' opinions, morally sound decisions in their interactions with one another. They equate their roles in relation to social justice with creating safe classrooms based on mutual respect for themselves and for those outside of their classrooms and schools. Often, participants used common clichés such as "no one gets left behind", classrooms should be a "safe zone", classrooms and people in general should be "tolerant", and, "we are all equal" in their discussions of their roles as educators in relation to social justice. For example: "To ensure that each child gets the attention they require, and that each child should be looked at as potential for strengthening the future; no one gets left behind" (Caden), "It is my place as a future teacher to make my classroom a safe place for discussion regarding social justice issues" (Daisy), "To make sure that your class is a safe zone

for all different backgrounds whether they come from a family rich or poor, religion, culture, sexuality etc" (Jake), "To create an accepting, tolerant classroom and to keep bullying at a minimum. This is done by modelling accepting, tolerant behaviour, and by telling students not to use certain words which denigrate minorities" (Tyler), and, "Ensuring to educate students on realizing that everyone has an equal right to live and we are all people who have a right to do what we want to do and be who we want to be" (Ange).

Such clichés, although seemingly noble on the surface, fail to relate social justice issues to structural, historical, and contemporary forms. Participants plan on achieving social justice through the promotion of mutual respect among their students, celebrating difference, and raising awareness to current social justice issues, although no examples of such issues were raised by participants.

The underlying theme, then, is that participants perceive that they have a responsibility to include social justice in their pedagogy. However, their understanding is limited to vague conceptions of equality associated with social justice in education, a concept that will be developed more deeply in Theme 2.

Teachers have the power to control social justice education. In addition to believing that social justice education is a moral responsibility of educators, for some participants, this responsibility included filtering or screening social justice issues, for example, on the basis of age and perceived maturity of their students. Many participants, then, plan on using privilege granted to them from their position and social standing to withhold or control information about social justice issues to particular groups.

This attitude is encapsulated in Kamil's statements:

I believe it is my responsibility to make my students aware of social justice issues that I feel they are capable of understanding, mature enough to handle, and able to take part in, even if it simply involves a fundraiser.

I will be involved in Social Justice issues. I will be a leader with the Catholic Organization for Development & Peace which runs a Thinkfast every year (24 hour famine to raise funds), Halloween for Hunger, Christmas Miracle and any other initiatives that I feel my students can become actively involved in.

Kamil's position reflects pre-service teachers' belief that when it comes to social justice issues, they have the power to be gatekeepers of such knowledge. The control of knowledge within schools is not a new concept, especially when considered that knowledge within schools mirrors social grouping and hierarchies in society (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Consequently, the presence of social justice in education has been, and continues to be, as shown by participant responses, influenced by discourses of power, privilege, and oppression in greater society. This belief is reflected by James, who relays that his responsibility in relation to social justice issues is to ensure student awareness of different issues, albeit, issues of his choosing as he states: "To make sure equity is maintained in the classroom. To make sure students are aware of different social justices."

Significantly, another facet of Kamil's response is his reliance on specific organizations powered by dominant social groups to promote inclusion. The vehicle for such programs as Thinkfast and Christmas Miracle, as mentioned by Kamil, is the Catholic Church, which is representative of the dominant Christian framework. Because holidays such as Christmas are inherently not inclusive of religious diversity, relying on such programs to introduce students to

social justice issues perpetuates dominant Christian values and beliefs about justice. Specifically, the belief that privileged groups should provide charity to those less privileged-minoritized groups, and that they hold the power to do so, is a key tenet of Christmas giving.

Caden sites using materials to highlight such issues: "I do, and I plan on doing so by providing students with books and other resources that reinforce equality; I plan on showing others that my students care by doing fundraisers and helping out at soup kitchens, etc."

Ellen's response indicates that she plans on using the curriculum guidelines to teach students about their differences. While this can be a positive practice, her intention to teach about difference leaves out deeper understandings of social justice and injustice: "I believe the curriculum involves trying to make schools more accepting, inclusive, safe, and equal for all students. By teaching students about our differences we will hopefully keep their minds open and prevent bias from forming in the future."

Ellen's statement indicates that she believes that students enter her classroom free from bias, and will leave with the knowledge of social justice provided solely by her, as the teacher. She views her role, then, as a key provider of social justice education, and plans to use her power to prevent students from acquiring bias by positively influencing their understanding of people who are different than them.

In participant implications that they are to be gatekeepers of knowledge, they are further perpetuating injustice by keeping the power of knowledge in the hands of the more powerful. In James' response, congruent with responses below, equality is seen as easily achievable if it is mandated by educators, a top-down approach which arguably keeps inequitable power relations in place. Such a stance of education is concurrent with the demographics of respondents, as all participants hold social power exclusive from their positions as future teachers, as they are either

White men or White women. In greater society, participants hold some form of privilege, whether their privilege comes from being male or from being White, thus, their views that they can influence students' understanding of others in relation to social justice is congruent with their positionalities and life experiences from their membership to dominant social groups.

Also seen in the above participants' responses is the belief that they are indeed capable of addressing social justice issues in the classroom, showcasing another feature of dominant group privilege and misconceptions. None of the participants questioned their ability to provide such an education. Rather, most stated that they have a moral responsibility, and as such, would work to fulfill it through their personal understandings of social justice. Such feelings are examples of internalized dominance, and are named by Adair and Howell (2007) as individuals from dominant groups feeling knowledgeable in their defining of social rules and in judging what is important for others (those of lower social standing) to know. Their confidence is telling as it also indicates that they see their learning as complete on the topic; no one expressed humility about the limits of their knowledge, their need to learn more, or their anticipation of what they might learn in their upcoming program of study.

Internalized dominance is clearly seen in Kamil's position that some knowledge is meant to be shared at a certain age or maturity level that is explicitly decided by the teacher, as the teacher (being dominant) is seen as being in a position to know better than their students (who hold much less power). He put it this way: "I believe it is my responsibility to make my students aware of social justice issues that I feel they are capable of understanding, mature enough to handle..."

A form of resistance can be derived from the finding that some pre-service teachers believe it is appropriate to control topics of social justice education. For participants who share

Kamil's attitude, allowing themselves to control the topics they include or exclude essentially gives them a justification to not engage in topics that they deem controversial or feel uncomfortable teaching. Such a contradictory approach to social justice education stands on the basis that student experience only begins to matter at a certain point in their lives or at a certain age or maturity. This belief, however, goes against the very goals of social justice education, which are to create a society free from discrimination based on race, age, sex, and other intersecting social categories.

Reasons behind participants' feelings of responsibility to engage in social justice education. The vagueness of participants' understanding of their roles is further found in their beliefs pertaining to the overall importance of social justice education, and is reflected in their reasons for engaging in social justice education. Many participants relayed personal meaning and responsibility to being agents of social justice through their own experiences of feeling oppressed or privileged. For example, Tyler stated that he wanted to teach for social justice so that his students did not, "feel rejected due to sexual orientation as I did in high school." Many participants said that they wanted to protect their future students from the trials they had faced as members of minoritized groups (for example, being gay).

Such a belief is seen in Tyler's response to: "Do you think social justice education matters? If so, to whom? Why?": "It matters eventually to the students who the teachers will be teaching. By teaching teachers how to create a tolerant, accepting classroom, students will be more comfortable and less likely to feel rejected". This belief is also seen in Jake's response: "Do you think these experiences [personal experience of feeling oppressed or privileged] influence your understanding of social justice in education?": "Yes. Every experience inspires

me to try to stand up for those individuals and get more involved in trying to educate the youth about social justice and taking a stand."

In contrast to Tyler and Jake, who depicted experiences of feeling oppressed and wanting to avoid having their students undergo the same feelings, James depicted feelings of wanting his students to experience the same privilege he felt he had in response to the question: "Do you think these experiences [personal experience of feeling oppressed or privileged] influence your understanding of social justice in education?": "Yes. I want everyone to have the access I had growing up" (James). This response implies that access is not structural but rather attitudinal, in other words, his teaching alone can enable his students to have the same access to resources that he has, presumably by virtue of opening their minds.

Despite a willingness and desire to assist students belonging to minoritized groups, many participants also remarked that when they had felt oppressed or privileged, they often "accepted their fate" often because they did not feel they were equipped with the support or resources necessary to change their situations. This was seen in participant responses to the question: "Have you ever felt oppressed or privileged based on your gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, language, or SES? How did you deal with the experience?" Participant responses include: "Yes. I complained to friends and family before ultimately accepting my fate" (Steve), "Yes. Keep it within, not sharing my feelings as to not single out myself or others" (Anna), "Yes. I ignored it because I didn't think that I could change it" (Ellen), "Yes. I ignored the situation - which is probably not the best way to deal with the experience" (Tyler), and, "Yes. I feel I have been dealt an unfair advantage for the place in the world I was born. I haven't done much about it to be honest, donate to charity is about the most" (James).

Finding that the participants above "accepted their fate" in privileged or oppressed positions is significant because although many participants felt powerless to change their own situations pertaining to oppression or privilege, they maintained the belief that as teachers, they could, and would try to, have a positive and changing impact on the lives of their future students belonging to minoritized groups. Often, participants envisioned protecting students in minoritized groups by creating safe classrooms for discussion of social justice issues. See, for example, Daisy's response: "It is my place as a future teacher to make my classroom a safe place for discussion regarding social justice issues", and James' response: "To make sure equity is maintained in the classroom. To make sure students are aware of different social justices". Additionally, participants envisioned a safe class for diverse groups of students as a way of protecting oppressed individuals. Such was found in participant responses: "To make sure that your class is a safe zone for all different backgrounds whether they come from a family rich or poor, religion, culture, sexuality etc." (Jake), "I hope to make my classroom inclusive and fair. I want all my students to feel as though they are represented and that their feelings matter" (Ellen), and, "To create an accepting, tolerant classroom and to keep bullying at a minimum. This is done by modelling accepting, tolerant behaviour, and by telling students not to use certain words which denigrate minorities" (Tyler).

Although the overwhelming response from participants highlighted the belief that social justice education is part of their responsibility as teachers, and participants were willing to attempt engagement with the topic, there are still many aspects of resistance that plague the progression of social justice education and knowledge. For instance, while many participants seemed to willingly accept a moral and professional responsibility to address social justice issues

in education, one participant, Steve, stood in stark contrast to the idea that social justice belongs

in the classroom:

> While I believe in finding solutions to pressing social and economic issues, I do not
>
> believe that the best forum for these issues is in the classroom. Unfortunately, I believe
>
> that the term and cause of "social justice" has become nothing more than a catch-all
>
> phrase used by teachers to push their own agendas and moral beliefs upon children.

Steve's response highlights important beliefs held by some pre-service teachers, namely,

that teachers can and should be objective in their teaching, and that personal morals and opinions

of social justice are adequate for truly learning about such issues. Steve's belief that schools are

neutral institutions is not uncommon in members of dominant social groups (Sensoy &

DiAngelo, 2012), including teachers within these groups, and highlights an ideology of

"neutrality as a moral standpoint" (Gallaher, 2001, p. 637). Holding such a view was drastically

different than all other participants, who clearly stated that they have a moral obligation to

provide social justice education to their students. I summarize participants' view that social

justice education is the responsibility of educators with responses from Ellen, Jake, Daisy, Tyler,

Kamil, Tanya, James, and Elaine on pages 51-53. Neutrality as a moral standpoint refers to the

claim that objectivity is the most appropriate way of examining and dealing with controversial

issues (Gallagher, 2001), in this case, social justice issues. While acknowledging that social

justice issues do exist, Steve simultaneously believes that they exist outside of the classroom, and

discussion of them should remain outside of the classroom. Such a belief reflects the

misconception that schools are neutral institutions where students shed their experiences and

positionalities once they enter school, and as such are unaffected by socially constructed discourses of power, privilege, and oppression.

Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) explain that most people are conditioned to see neutrality and objectivity as possible and that attaining such neutrality is simply a matter of choice, an idea that is promoted in Steve's earlier responses. Steve's second response, however, is contradictory in that on the one hand, he argues that social justice issues do not belong in the classroom, and on the other hand, states that it is the teachers' responsibility to provide students with information pertaining to "both sides" of social justice issues in order for students to make their own understanding. He says that,

> Morals and values should be taught and learned through a student's family and friends. The role of the teacher should be to facilitate understanding by presenting both sides of a social issue, arm students with information and allow them to reach their own conclusions.

The concept of having "two sides" to social justice issues is also reflected in Mitch's response:

> Social justice has a very negative reputation in some professions, as a teacher you must be aware of that. Depending on what side of the issue you are on and who is doing the looking you could have many opinions.

Two underlying assumptions constitute Steve's responses: the first being that socialization only occurs outside of the classroom, and the second being that teachers should

attempt neutrality when approaching social justice issues. Steve's claim of political neutrality does not distinguish opinions from critical thinking in social justice education. By stating that he can provide students with objective information about social justice issues, he is saying, in effect, that, as Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) problematize, common sense and popular opinion are equal to informed understanding. Steve's understanding is problematic because critical thinking goes beyond personal opinion and into multiple layers of complexity. He also implies that he holds the knowledge needed to present "both sides" of a social justice issue objectively, when in reality, anything shared from teacher to student is laden in a social and political context and therefore carries meaning. In Steve's case, such messages are influenced by discourses of the dominant group to which he belongs as a White male.

Largely, the above theme highlights pre-service teachers' belief that it is part of their responsibility to provide social justice education to their future students. Such a belief is managed by pre-service teachers' willingness to attempt engagement with social justice issues in vague ways, while maintaining ultimate control over their students in what they choose to teach, and how they choose to teach. Misconceptions highlighted by previous research (Johnson, 2006; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012) were found to still exist in the participants of this study, and are the result of dominant ideologies that continue to direct the provision of critical engagement with, and understanding of, social justice and social justice education.

Thus, while most participants were willing to bring social justice into their classrooms and engage in social justice education, most pre-service teachers (the participants in this study being among them) are part of dominant social groups whose beliefs are informed by dominant discourses about what social justice and social justice education really mean. As such, teaching of and for social justice is guided by discourses that serve to perpetuate social injustice.

Theme 2: Discourses guiding a problematic understanding of social justice and social justice education. Theme 1 (above) defined pre-service teachers' feelings of responsibility to engage in social justice issues in the classroom, as well as complexities associated with such a responsibility. Throughout the above analysis, discourses perpetuating common misconceptions about schooling and social justice continually surfaced.

Discourses, as discussed in the literature review chapter, are infused with unequal power relations that are carried and perpetuated by socialization and conditioning (DiAngelo, 2010). The participants whose responses will be used to illustrate the domination of the individuality and tolerance discourses belong to two socially dominant groups: White males and females.

Participants' understanding of social justice is largely characterized by two key discourses that are extended from liberalist ideologies of social justice: a discourse of tolerance and a discourse of individualism. I highlight participant responses to unpack these discourses as they guide participant understandings of social justice and social justice education.

The discourse of individualism. In a social justice context, the discourse of individualism refers to the generalized belief that if all people view other people—specifically those of minoritized groups—as unique individuals, "isms", such as racism or sexism, will disappear (DiAngelo, 2010). Society and societal institutions tell us that we are all equal; an idea that continues to be a popular belief because its message is governed by policy and law stating that group membership is not relevant to individual opportunity (Flax, 1999) and that people are now free from discrimination based on social categories. The discourse of individualism posits social groupings, for example, those based on race, gender, or sexual orientation, as irrelevant (DiAngelo, 2010). Thus, claiming that social grouping is relevant to one's life experiences is

often seen as limiting one's ability to stand as an individual, which is the assumption and the goal of individualism (Flax, 1999).

The belief that emphasizing fairness and celebrating difference (individualism) is an effective way to create equality can be seen in Daisy's response to the question: "What is your current understanding of social justice education?":

> I believe it is important to educate people on social justice because we are all living in a diverse world filled with people of various backgrounds, and its only fair to treat them with the same love and respect we would with others of similar backgrounds as ourselves.

Daisy's response highlights a belief that achieving social justice means tackling such issues on a person-by person-basis. Attributing social justice to individual experience is also reflected in Ellen's response: "My professional responsibilities as teacher in relation to social justice are huge. I hope to make my classroom inclusive and fair. I want all my students to feel as though they are represented and that their feelings matter".

Further, Tyler aims to teach about and promote social justice on an individual basis through promoting behaviours that emphasize respect for all, as indicated in his response, "Social justice education should help us create an inclusive classroom where differences are tolerated and accepted and bullying is kept to a minimum."

Caden also holds Tyler's view that reinforcing equality is an appropriate approach to attaining socially just classrooms, "I plan on doing so by providing students with books and other resources that reinforce equality; I plan on showing others that my students care by doing fundraisers and helping out at soup kitchens, etc."

As seen in the responses above, participants' understanding of social justice is based on the belief that social justice can be achieved on a person-to-person basis, that is, that influencing the understanding of individual people is working for social justice. Such a belief indicates participants' assumption that raising their future students' awareness of social justice issues is powerful enough to promote student thinking about such issues. Two participants hope that in teaching for social justice their students will become active in such issues, as seen in participant responses to the question: "Do you envision being involved in social justice issues when you become a teacher? If so, how do you think this might look like?":

> I will be involved in Social Justice issues. I will be a leader with the Catholic Organization for Development & Peace which runs a Thinkfast every year (24 hour famine to raise funds), Halloween for Hunger, Christmas Miracle and any other initiatives that I feel my students can become actively involved in. – Kamil

Caden doesn't question how using a Christian framework might be problematic in terms of affirming diversity. Further, he defines social justice as individual acts on the part of the advantaged towards the disadvantaged: "I do, and I plan on doing so by providing students with books and other resources that reinforce equality; I plan on showing others that my students care by doing fundraisers and helping out at soup kitchens, etc."

In response to the question: "What is your current understanding of social justice education?" Caden reinforced his belief that social justice can be achieved on a person-by-person basis:

Educating students to think of others in an equitable manner; to help students understand that there is a power and privilege paradigm surrounding many aspects of our world; helping students learn the different ways that they can make a difference in the world for themselves and others.

While Caden was the one participant who used the terms "power" and "privilege," his and Kamil's responses highlight the way he is using those terms—the belief that social justice education and activism can be attributed to those with positions of power assisting those with less power. For example, working for social justice occurs when people who have access to public platforms and funds (charities), assist those with limited resources. Caden and Kamil's statements, along with the other participants sited within this theme, however, neglect engagement with issues of power, oppression, and privilege as central components to social justice issues and social justice education, and remain consistent with the beliefs in previous findings by Flax (1999). Thus, participants view social justice issues and subsequent ways of ratifying such issues as individual, rather than societal and structural. For instance, participants equated social justice education as a goal for particular individuals. Such an idea is vague in its meaning, but attempts to create inclusive and accepting classrooms on the basis of equality.

Another component to the discourse of individualism is that group membership and subsequent privilege or lack thereof, is irrelevant when examining access or barriers to social resources. In answering the question: "Do you think social justice education matters? If so, to whom? Why?" Caden responded:

It does matter, to everyone. It matters to everyone because it keeps people in check, it reminds others that they do not have to be living pay check to pay check in a minimum wage job just because of the area they went to school.

Through Caden's response that "others" need to be "kept in check" and reminded that they don't "have to" live in poverty, he implies that marginalized peoples chose their marginalization and invokes victim-blaming and cultural deficient discourses (DiAngelo, 2010). Other participants also implied such beliefs in their responses: "Ensuring to educate students on realizing that everyone has an equal right to live and we are all people who have a right to do what we want to and be who we want to be" (Ange), "I believe social justice education is the study of trying to have everyone equal no matter their background or past experience" (Jake), and, "Treating everyone equally and breaking down barriers such as race, class, religion, sexuality" (Anna).

In the above responses, the participants posit that all people act independently of one another, reinforcing the belief that social positioning does not influence individual outcome (Flax, 1999). In a sense, participants are stating that achieving mutual respect among people who are different, is achieving social justice.

The discourse of individualism, as reflected in participant responses above, is also reflective of internalized dominance of groups with privilege (Adair & Howell, 2007) namely the participants in this study. Such an understanding, guided by a respect for individuality, fails to acknowledge the intersectionality of social groups and subsequent privilege and oppression, and as such, disconnects pre-service teachers from uncomfortable realities associated with contemporary social injustice (Johnson, 2006) of which they may or may not be aware. This

approach also highlights the underlying experiences of participants as belonging to dominant

social groups. In her study of white pre-service teachers and anti-racist education, DiAngelo

(2010) states that because participants believed that their race had not had an impact on their

lives, they presumed that it is more important to claim that everyone is equal, rather than

acknowledge the differences that separate people. Subsequently, oppressed and minoritized

groups' needs are not understood by most people and therefore tend to go unnoticed and

unaddressed. Many of the participants in this study, who belong to dominant groups, fail to

understand the experiences of minoritized groups. In their attempt to mandate equality,

participants are also saying that as individuals, they are objective, and thus they can be objective

when viewing others (DiAngelo, 2010). This standpoint, despite being a widely held view, is

severely flawed and has been discounted by various authors including Copeland (2005) and

Hochschild and Weaver (2007) who concede that discrimination is still deeply rooted in today's

society. As DiAngelo (2010) puts it, "Because it obscures how social positioning impacts

opportunity, the discourse of individualism is a dominant discourse that functions ideologically

to reinforce and reproduce relations of unequal power" (p. 4).

　　　　Concepts of fairness and equality in relation to social justice highly correlate to a

discourse of individualism as found in participant responses. Equal opportunity is further

explained by Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) as an attitudinal dimension of privilege, where those

promoting equal opportunity believe that injustice is in the past, illuminating the tendency of

dominant groups to dismiss the experiences of oppression of minoritized groups. Johnson (2006)

states that people attempting to engage in social justice work may take the stance of trying to "be

fair", meaning that they will treat people of different social groups as they would those in their

particular social group. In terms of teaching and education, participants believe that they can

teach social justice education by promoting and celebrating diversity within their classrooms as way of managing social injustice. Such a stance is clear in many participant responses declaring that social justice can be easily achieved as long as teachers teach students that they are all equal, while at the same time important and unique.

The discourse of tolerance. A second discourse correlated to pre-service teachers' misunderstanding of social justice and social justice education is the discourse of tolerance. For example, Blommaert and Verschueren (1998) discuss the tolerance discourse in their analysis of the anti-foreigner movement and subsequent anti-racist movement in Belgium. They discuss tolerance as a form of fighting racism with "soft" anti-racism. Blommaert and Verschueren claim that people engaging in "soft" anti-racism (that is, promoting tolerance to diversity by claiming that all people are equal and should be treated as such) "can effortlessly assume the role of a non-racist, without having to go into self-criticism at the underlying level of fundamental attitudes towards diversity" (1998, p. 173). Claiming that people are all equal and attempting to treat all people as equal as a way of promoting social justice allows for people (particularly those of dominant groups) to remain unaware of the systematic nature of injustice. Thus, people can focus on treating symptoms of social injustice (for example, bullying based on physical ability) rather than critically examining structural oppression faced by those with physical disabilities. Similar to Blommaert and Verschueren's findings, many participants in this study also hold the assumption that "tolerance is the antidote for racism" (1998, p. 173) and other forms of oppression. The following are examples from the interview transcripts in response to "What do you perceive as your professional responsibilities as a teacher in relation to social justice?: "To promote awareness and understanding of the diversity in society to set up the mind for tolerance and acceptance" (Elaine), "To make sure that your class is a safe zone for all different

backgrounds whether they come from a family rich or poor, religion, culture, sexuality etc."
(Jake), and, in Tyler's response to: "What is your current understanding of social justice
education?": "Social justice education should help us create an inclusive classroom where
differences are tolerated and accepted and bullying is kept to a minimum."

In response to the question: "Do you think social justice education matters? If so, to
whom? Why?" Tyler reflected, "Yes. It matters eventually to the students who the teachers will
be teaching. By teaching teachers how to create a tolerant, accepting classroom, students will be
more comfortable and less likely to feel rejected". Tyler, again, demonstrated his belief that
tolerance creates socially just classrooms in his response to the question: "What do you perceive
as your professional responsibilities as a teacher in relation to social justice?": "To create an
accepting, tolerant classroom and to keep bullying at a minimum. This is done by modelling
accepting, tolerant behaviour, and by telling students not to use certain words which denigrate
minorities.

Such responses indicate that social justice requires the opportunity to learn about others,
namely, those who are "othered," and that this practice can lead people to question their
understanding, and subsequently, promote tolerance of social difference. For example, if students
consider that differences are beneficial and that treating people badly based on their social
category is morally wrong, they may become tolerant of those who are different. Again, as
addressed in Theme 1, participants view social justice as something that can be achieved on an
individual basis, specifically, through promoting tolerance.

Carr's (2008) finding that many teachers believe in a clear and easy formula to engage in
issues of social justice is similar yet distinct from the findings of this study. Although
participants did not explicitly indicate that teaching for social justice could be done without

struggle, they reflected the belief that generally addressing symptoms of social injustice, (for example, bullying) are adequate for creating socially just schools and classrooms. Tyler, for instance, claimed that,

> Social justice education should help us to create an inclusive classroom where differences are tolerated and accepted and bullying is kept to a minimum. This is done by modelling accepting, tolerant behaviour, and by telling students not to use certain words which denigrate minorities.

Therefore, in participant views, social justice can be achieved by advocating for change in human interactions. Specifically, teachers can influence their students to behave in ways they view are conducive to a social justice framework. For participants, promoting tolerance of people of different social groups other than those to which they belong suggests that instead of looking at social and structural barriers to equality, they tend to focus on blanketed equality, phrased by Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) as appealing to a universalized humanity. This stance is apparent in the following responses to the question: "What is your current understanding of social justice education?": "I believe social justice education is the study of trying to have everyone equal no matter their background or past experience" (Jake), "Educating students on race, class, ability, language, appearance, sexuality, and gender. Along with positive ways of promoting equality in these areas" (Daisy), and, "I believe the curriculum involves trying to make schools more accepting, inclusive, safe, and equal for all students. By teaching students about our differences we will hopefully keep their minds open and prevent bias from forming in the future" (Ellen).

The belief in the quest for a universalized humanity is also seen in Jake and Caden's responses to the question: "What do you perceive as your professional responsibilities as a teacher in relation to social justice?": "To make sure that your class is a safe zone for all different backgrounds whether they come from a family rich or poor, religion, culture, sexuality etc." (Jake), and, "To ensure that each child gets the attention they require, and that each child should be looked at as potential for strengthening the future; no one gets left behind" (Caden).

The belief that equality can be achieved through providing a safe place for diverse groups of students is extrapolated by Caden in response to the question: "Do you envision being involved in social justice issues when you become a teacher? If so, how do you think this might look like?": "I do, and I plan on doing so by providing students with books and other resources that reinforce equality; I plan on showing others that my students care by doing fundraisers and helping out at soup kitchens, etc.".

The above responses posit another common view among the participants, which is that social justice, while being achieved on a person to person basis, involves standing up for groups who are less fortunate. Particularly, Caden's response suggests that he does not anticipate that his own classroom will have students with varying degrees of privilege and oppression, but rather, that his job as an educator in terms of social justice involves using his privilege to help minoritized "other" groups, outside of school. He also indicates his intention to use his students as a vehicle to showcase his commitment (and their commitment) to social justice. Caden's view is corroborated by others in the participant group, for example, Mitch's response to the question: "What do you perceive as your professional responsibilities as a teacher in relation to social justice?" He said: "to teach about issues and how we as a society can reach decisions or

conclusions in a variety of ways, using social justice as one of them." Kamil's response to the

same question is especially telling of the social "othering" theme, as he states:

> I believe it is my responsibility to make my students aware of social justice issues that I
>
> feel they are capable of understanding, mature enough to handle, and able to take part in
>
> initiatives (even if it simply involves a fundraiser). . . . I will be involved in Social Justice
>
> issues. I will be a leader with the Catholic Organization for Development & Peace which
>
> runs a Thinkfast every year (24 hour famine to raise funds), Halloween for Hunger,
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> Christmas Miracle and any other initiatives that I feel my students can become actively
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> involved in.

Kamil suggests, like Caden, that his role as an educator of social justice is teaching students, who

he feels will not have been oppressed, about the experiences of others, namely those who are

visibly oppressed. This theme is also exposed in Ange's response as she discusses social justice

issues as "around us" rather than embedded in the world we live in and experience, in her

response to the question: "Do you think social justice education matters? If so, to whom? Why?":

"It matters for everyone. There are issues around us everywhere so it is important to educate

people that differences are GOOD not bad."

Interestingly, although the survey included a question specifically asking participants to

describe their understanding of social justice, their answers to the question: "What are your

professional responsibilities as a teacher in relation to social justice?" were especially telling of

their inherent and perhaps unconscious beliefs and understandings. Many responses reinforced

the idea that social justice refers to equality, fairness, and tolerance. Responses from Tyler and

Ellen are key examples:

> To create an accepting, tolerant classroom and to keep bullying at a minimum. This is
>
> done by accepting, tolerant behaviour, and by telling students not to use certain words
>
> which denigrate minorities. – Tyler

> I believe the curriculum involves trying to make schools more accepting, inclusive, safe,
>
> and equal for all students. By teaching students about our differences we will hopefully
>
> keep their minds open and prevent bias from forming in the future. – Ellen

Two participants provided responses that reflect another facet of equality, that is, the

misconception that the perceived or explicit "right" to certain things (for example, to live, be

educated, or to not be discriminated against) overrides the implicit or hidden inequities in power

and privilege that hinder people's abilities to gain access to social, economic, or political status

and/or materials. That is, the concept that having the political right to receive an education means

that all people will have equal access to such an education and equal chances at achieving

academic success.

Such a belief is seen in responses to the question: What is your current understanding of

social justice?": "Education about and for equality" (Anna), "To create an accepting, tolerant

classroom and to keep bullying at a minimum. This is done by modelling accepting, tolerant

behaviour, and by telling students not to use certain words which denigrate minorities" (Tyler),

"My professional responsibilities as teacher in relation to social justice are huge. I hope to make

my classroom inclusive and fair. I want all my students to feel as though they are represented and that their feelings matter" (Ellen), "To ensure that each child gets the attention they require, and that each child should be looked at as potential for strengthening the future; no one gets left behind" (Caden), and, "The right for all students to an education" (Abby).

Abby further highlights the belief that equality is the avenue towards social justice in her response to the question: "What do you perceive as your professional responsibilities as a teacher in relation to social justice?" She said it is to, "provide the best education and resources equally to every student." In another sense, this belief implies that all people truly can achieve equal success if they persist enough, despite socially constructed power inequities.

Such a misconception is evident in the following responses: "Ensuring to educate students on realizing that everyone has an equal right to live and we are all people who have a right to do what we want to do and be who we want to be" (Ange), and, "Treating everyone equally and breaking down barriers such as race, class, religion, sexuality" (Anna).

As illustrated by survey responses, many participants' beliefs stem from a discourse of tolerance, largely reflective of participants positionalities (as members of dominant social groups). The ideal of tolerance is used by many participants in their attempt to negotiate their roles as social justice educators and is heavily influenced by societal messages conveying that in Canada, we have achieved political equality. Thus, it is mandated that people are equal, and as such, must be treated equally. As per many participants' responses, they believe that tolerance can be equated with equality, and achieving equality simultaneously achieves social justice.

Conclusions. This study sheds important light on the initial conceptions of pre-service teachers in relation to social justice and social justice education. My analysis of the data pointed to two central themes. The first is pre-service teachers' perceived moral responsibility to engage

in social justice education, characterized by pre-service teachers' feelings of moral responsibility and their perceived and actual power to control the provision of social justice education. The second is evidence of dominant discourses of individualism and tolerance guiding pre-service teachers' problematic understandings of social justice education.

Participants' feelings of a moral responsibility to engage in social justice, and the perception that they possess the power to positively influence the lives of their future students through a social justice approach, indicates that they have an awareness of the privilege they hold as educators. Participants' willingness and responsibility to engage in social justice education shows that they intend to negotiate their positions of power within the education system to provide their students with experiences in which they can learn to make morally sound decisions in their interactions with one another. They equate their roles in social justice with creating safe classrooms based on mutual respect for themselves and for those outside of their classrooms and schools, specifically on a person-by-person basis. Despite their willingness to engage in social justice education, many participants described their roles in terms of vague conceptions of buzzwords associated with social justice education, for example, "no one gets left behind", and, "we are all equal". Such a conception of social justice education, however, neglects a deeper examination of contemporary, structural systems of power and oppression experienced by students.

In addition to feelings of moral responsibility for providing social justice education, many participants provided responses that indicated that social justice education can and should be filtered by educators. Such a notion was wholly captured in this statement from Kamil: "I believe it is my responsibility to make my students aware of social justice issues that I feel they are capable of understanding, mature enough to handle, and able to take part in." Other

participants shared his belief that social justice education can be restricted to certain groups of students (based on, for example, age), which assumes that students enter classrooms free from personal experiences of structural power, oppression, and privilege, and as such should gain understanding of such experiences from their teachers. Feelings of internal dominance stemmed from participants' responses in relation to participants' feelings of competence to teach about social justice without question.

Many participants' main reason for engaging in social justice stemmed from personal experiences related to feeling oppressed or privileged in their own lives. Such experiences fuelled their desire to create safe classrooms for their future students who may belong to minoritized groups. As a result, although they lacked engagement with deeper issues of social justice pertaining to social and structural inequities, participants seemed to understand that their future classrooms and schools will likely include students of minoritized and privileged groups who could potentially benefit from social justice education.

While most participants agreed that social justice education is a responsibility of educators, Steve provided responses that showcased another view of education, specifically that schools and teachers should not provide students with moral teachings. Instead, they should remain neutral when social justice issues arise. Claiming objectivity as a moral standpoint in the classroom assumes that socialization only occurs outside of the classroom, and that schools are neutral institutions, an ideology associated with dominant group membership. Therefore, although most participants were willing to engage in social justice education, most participants, (congruent with most pre-service teachers in Ontario) are members of dominant social groups and as such, have been socialized with dominant discourses about the meaning of social justice and social justice education that serve to perpetuate social injustice.

The discourses arising from the data (individualism and tolerance) are largely reflective of participants' positionalities as members of dominant social groups. Ideologies of individualism were found in participant beliefs in fairness and equality as tools to achieving social justice. Such a belief is congruent with the notion that inequality is in the past, and that success is now based on personal willingness and persistence to achieve, rather than being influenced by structural barriers faced by minoritized groups, and privilege associated with belonging to dominant groups. Treating people "equally" and teaching about diversity, however, diminishes the experiences of oppression faced by minoritized groups and strongly correlates to tolerance, a second discourse guiding participants' understanding of social justice. In their responses, many participants illuminated the discourse of tolerance in their descriptions of social justice education. For example, many participants believe that as long as they treat their students equally, and teach them to be tolerant of others; they are achieving socially just classrooms. Similar to individualism, taking a tolerant approach to diversity in the classroom neglects engagement with current issues of social justice associated structural inequities of power and oppression that characterize social groups. Participants' intentions to teach social justice while informed by such ideologies can serve to perpetuate the very social inequities they many attempt to address.

Therefore, many participants were found to negotiate their roles as social justice educators with ideologies associated with dominant group membership. Namely, participants' beliefs of their roles have been informed by societal messages that promote individualism and tolerance in the classroom as a method to teaching about social justice education. While participants may have positive intentions for creating safe and inclusive classrooms for marginalized students, participants neglected engagement with deeper, structural inequities of

privilege and oppression. Notably, participants are those who possess privilege, which, as such, does not guarantee that they will not engage in structural aspects of inequality, but it certainly makes it a more predicable outcome.

In this chapter, I described the findings of this research. I discerned two important themes from the interview data: perceived moral responsibility to engage in social justice education and discourses (individualism and tolerance) guiding problematic understandings of social justice and social justice education held by pre-service teachers. Such themes were dissected and synthesized into distinct categories, which reveal problematic understandings of social justice and social justice education among pre-service teachers, discussed next in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five: "Implications of Progress": What the Findings Mean for Teacher Education

Here, I deepen my discussion of the findings in Chapter Four, connecting them to the initial research objectives. I provide further examination of pre-service teachers' understanding of their roles and responsibilities, pre-service teacher understanding of social justice related concepts, and pre-service teacher positionality.

Based on the findings in the previous chapter and consistent with many studies pertaining to teaching and social justice (see Agarwal, 2008; James, 1997; Solomon, 1998; and Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1996), I conclude that there is still much work to be done in the development of pre-service teachers' understanding of social justice.

This study yielded two themes crucial to understanding pre-service teachers' knowledge of social justice and social justice education. I found that most pre-service teachers, with the exception of one, feel a moral responsibility to engage in social justice education in their future classrooms. In addition to feeling morally obligated to provide social justice education, most participants felt that they should create and promote classrooms in which their students feel safe and included. Most participants reflected their dominant social positions and subsequent experiences through their beliefs that teachers have the right to screen and control information about social justice. However, one participant, Steve, claimed that teachers should refrain from teaching social justice in the classroom in favour of teacher "neutrality" about such subjects.

The most obvious theme that emerged from this study was the participant beliefs based on liberalist ideologies of social justice as evident in pre-service teachers' responses. The first, the discourse of individualism, is the idea that all people are equal, regardless of their social positioning, and that blanketed equality is best for all, despite structural barriers inherent for those belonging to oppressed groups. This theme was evident in participants' beliefs that equality

can be achieved as long as educators teach students that "we are all equal" in our uniqueness and that diversity should be celebrated. The discourse of individualism was also the case in participants' claims that group positioning is irrelevant to students' understanding of social justice and their success in school. The second discourse was that of tolerance, specifically that tolerance creates socially just classrooms and that as long as all people respect each other and their differences, social justice is achieved. This idea was evident in pre-service teachers' beliefs that promoting tolerance is an appropriate approach to combating social injustice within their classrooms. Intersecting with the discourse of individualism, promoting tolerance and acceptance neglects to enlighten students to complexities associated with social justice, such as structural and institutional oppressions that keep privilege in the hands of dominant groups. Evident through both discourse analyses was the belief that social justice can be achieved on a person-by-person basis. In other words, social justice could be based on influencing people's individual experiences. While this may positively influence students in their classrooms, participants neglected engagement with social justice on a multi-layered, structural level.

Throughout data analysis and the compilation of findings, it became clear that participants lacked engagement with self-reflection, especially in terms of identifying how their positionality impacts their views and experiences of and with the world and others. This was seen through a lack of participant acknowledgement that their experiences and future positions as teachers shape their understanding of social justice issues. This lack of engagement becomes clear in participant reflections pertaining to their understanding of social justice in education, as their framework is largely based on dominant social group beliefs and misconceptions about minoritized groups and their own privilege. For example, as illustrated through the discourse of

individualism, many participants felt that as long as people (namely those from minoritized groups) believe they are equal and capable, they can break free of their social status.

Participants' feelings of responsibility to engage in social justice education were guided by their understanding of such concepts. The two key themes, that is, a moral responsibility to engage in social justice education, and evidence of discourses guiding a problematic understanding of social justice are, in significant ways, opposing. For instance, although participants intend to engage in social justice education, the ways in which they intend to achieve social justice do not support their intentions. I argue that in order to engage critically with issues of social justice, pre-service teachers need to move beyond tolerance and fairness, grounded in human relationships, and toward societal scrutiny of structural injustice.

As teachers, however, participants did not state that they intend to be activists of social justice, separating themselves from wider responsibilities related to social justice. Many participants equated their roles of social justice to creating change on a micro level, for instance, one student or classroom at a time. The focus of their role as teachers in relation to social justice was primarily based on their future classrooms and schools, thus, they feel that tolerance and fairness in such contexts is achieving socially just classrooms. As teachers, their roles included providing students with moral obligations of how they should treat one another, specifically those who belong to different social groups. In such a view, pre-service teachers believe they will fulfill their roles as educators by encouraging students to become tolerant and accepting of others, and by the pre-service teachers' themselves educating their future students about social difference and advocating for equality.

The findings discussed in the previous chapter are significant for understanding current pre-service teachers' understandings of social justice and social justice education, and provide

insight into their potential, future pedagogical approaches. The themes that I discerned were: pre-service teachers perceive that they have a moral responsibility to engage in social justice education; and there are two discourses, discourses of individualism and tolerance, guiding a problematic understanding of social justice education. These findings are crucial to the implementation of social justice education because teacher beliefs often guide practice. Thus, if teachers maintain such understandings of social justice and the core components of social justice (oppression, privilege, power, and equity) they are likely going to teach a flawed understanding, ultimately perpetuating the very inequities they are attempting to address.

The following sections provide further discussion of the research findings, revisiting pre-service teacher understanding of their roles and responsibilities, pre-service teacher understanding of social justice related concepts, and pre-service teacher positionality.

Pre-service Teachers' Understanding of Their Roles and Responsibilities

Although social justice education is a mandate of current Ontario education policy, participant responses reflected a view that providing social justice education is a moral responsibility, rather than explicitly mandated in various curriculum documents. Examples include Ontario Ministry of Education documents such as, *Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009), Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools (2008)* and *Ontario Curriculum Grades 1-8: Language (2006)*.

While it is certainly positive that most participants felt obligated to provide social justice education for the good of their future students, there is a missed opportunity in not acknowledging curriculum documents that stand behind teachers who attempt such a challenge. Lack of pre-service teacher knowledge of curriculum documents pertaining to social justice initiatives falls on teacher education programs. Teacher education programs provide a potentially

rich venue by which pre-service teachers could fuel their willingness to engage in topics which

some deem as controversial or radical. The overall design of teacher education programs,

designed to help new teachers develop and practice skills they will use in the classroom, make

decisions, and become innovative and adapting learners (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005) lacks a

clear focus on raising awareness to societal inequities that impact the lives of all people,

including students, which the results of this study show. Such beliefs tend to result from various

factors, including ineffective teaching of the roles and responsibilities of teachers as outlined in

curriculum.

When considering teacher education programs that do cover social justice curriculum, the

majority of pre-service teachers belonging to dominant social groups (for example, those who are

White and middle class) did not consider social justice, power, and oppression issues to be

meaningful (Marvin & Smith-Maddox, 2007). Such a lack of engagement can lead pre-service

teachers to avoid explicit teaching of controversial issues, such as issues of power and

oppression in relation to race or gender (Levine-Rasky, 1998). Schmidt et al.'s (2012) findings

were concurrent to the findings of this study, namely, that within teacher education programs,

pre-service teachers largely forego, consciously or otherwise, a critical lens in favour of

tolerance and acceptance through anti-oppression curricula. Although tolerance and acceptance

are positive ways to encourage individualized, positive social behaviours and interactions among

students, such an approach neglects acknowledgment with the notions that oppression and power

as systemic, institutionalized, and resistant to change. This is not to minimize the fact that

tolerance, can, however, have a positive impact for those belonging to minoritized groups, when

tolerance is categorized by acceptance and mutual respect. However, tolerance does not address

structural inequality and thus is not considered by many to be a characteristic of critical social justice.

The ideal in social justice education, in my perspective, is to see pre-service teachers critically engage in discussions about power, privilege, oppression, and equity as systematic and perpetuated by dominant discourse. Additionally, it is ideal to have pre-service teachers feel empowered to act to create social change, and to foster such attitudes in their students when they are doing their placement teaching. As my analysis indicates, such an ideal, however, is confounded by pre-service teachers' lack of critical engagement with issues of power and oppression, and in their promotion tolerance and individualism as key components of social justice education.

Pre-service Teacher Understanding of Social Justice Related Concepts

In addition to understanding what pre-service teachers perceive as their duties in relation to social justice education, it is crucial to examine pre-service teachers understanding of concepts of social justice, as such information guides the provision of social justice education. It is important to consider pre-service teachers' understanding of social justice while in their teacher education programs so they can be better prepared to enter the workforce as change agents. As found in this study, many pre-service teachers are taught about social justice and have some understanding of it. However, it is clear that such an understanding is not rooted in historical and contemporary forms of power that perpetuate inequities, rather it exists within dominant, ideological frameworks of which pre-service teachers may or may not be aware. Thus, social justice exists as a vague goal for teachers to work towards on a student-by-student, or classroom-by-classroom basis, emphasizing positive human relationships.

Throughout analysis of the data, I found a clear lack of engagement with the key topics of social justice as examined in the literature review above: oppression, privilege, equity, and power. Only one participant mentioned any of these terms and when he did, it was followed by an uncritical definition of how they function. There was also a lack of engagement with the concept of positionality, meaning that participants did not discuss their positionality and experience as informing their views as educators, despite the majority of participants belonging to dominant social groups. McIntosh's (1990) belief holds that, in order for pre-service teachers to engage in versions of social justice education that do not ultimately perpetuate social inequities, they must engage with concepts of oppression, privilege, and power. In addition, they must be made aware of the varying life experiences of others in order to create socially just classrooms. Such acknowledgments were not seen in participants' understandings of social justice, or how they plan to achieve socially just classrooms. Thus, their future pedagogical approaches could limit student learning of the various ways inequitable practices are generated and perpetuated by education (McLaren, 2007), ultimately perpetuating societal inequities. Therefore, where there is potential for teachers to enhance sensitivity to the way students experience education, such sensitivity comes from engagement with concepts and influences of social positioning (Carr, 2008), which I did not find among the participants in this study.

Implications for such findings fall to teacher education programs that need to involve pre-service teachers in learning about social justice issues in contemporary forms and as they have evolved throughout history. Such learning, in addition to learning about the diverse experiences of others, namely, those belonging to oppressed social groups, can provide pre-service teachers (especially those belonging to dominant groups) with awareness of social inequities from which they benefit. Although such a task may be attempted in teacher education programs, resistance to

learn about social justice manifests itself in a variety of ways. A key ideological hurdle is an unwillingness to engage in social justice topics based on guilt attributed to being a member of the dominant group. Realizing that one has unearned privilege can hinder powerful groups' willingness to engage in topics because such a practice raises awareness to inequity that exists today, despite political messages conveying that all people are equal. Ideological discourses teach pre-service teachers that their job is to ensure students are tolerant of one another also hinders pre-service teachers' willingness to engage critically in social justice, as it becomes easier for pre-service teachers to follow dominant thinking about the subject, focusing on celebrating diversity and ignoring power inequity.

While it was noted that most participants have developed personal agency in relation to mainstream conceptualizations of social justice and seem committed to mainstream forms of social justice education in their future work, their ability to tackle such subjects is questioned based on their problematic understanding of social justice, due largely to entrenched dominant ideologies. Thus, while participants were willing to participate in social justice education on the surface, they lacked engagement in self-examination of social locations and of their roles and responsibilities as educators. In their discussions of how they might address social justice in the classroom, they relied on their power (based on membership to dominant groups and from being an authority in the classroom) to control the types of social justice education they would provide students, if at all. This finding can help in the development of pedagogy that guides student teachers in critical self-reflection.

Pre-service Teacher Positionality

Participants in this study provided much information regarding their experiences related to social justice and social justice education. What I found to be most telling, however, was the absence of

self-reflectivity in relation to their roles as educators. The most important, I argue, is

participants' lack of engagement with critical self-reflection, a finding that mirrors practices

based on the Ontario education curriculum that does not focus significantly on the experiences of

minoritized groups. According to Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012), this is a dilemma that further

perpetuates inequities. Due to the overwhelming evidence that dominant ideologies guide

participants' beliefs, it is clear that participants were unable to see and validate contemporary

oppression; despite some being victims of imbalances of power themselves. Because of their

membership in dominant social groups, participants ignored the existence of the very system that

benefits those of the dominant group and minoritizes those of oppressed groups (Sensoy &

DiAngelo, 2012). Neglecting to discuss or raise awareness to structural and institutional practices

that cause inequities between social groups allowed participants to maintain a positive self-

concept. Participants' willingness to take up social justice work on a micro level (for example,

within their own future classrooms), albeit on their terms, allowed them to avoid engagement

with difficult topics and avoid greater societal issues. This was seen in participants' claims that

they could achieve classrooms in which all students are viewed as equal, and taught that they are

all equal. Placing the focus of social justice education on how students are viewed and the

promotion of tolerance removes the responsibility of self-reflection of their own privilege. As

Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) state, it is through the examination of pre-service teachers'

positionality, which refers to one's position in relation to others on the basis of intersecting social

categories, that they are better able to serve the needs of their future students. Scholarship on

positionality (for example, Johnson, 2006; and Marvin & Smith-Maddox, 2007) has found that

reflecting on one's positionality is crucial to recognizing that knowledge is socially constructed

and dependent on the intersection of cultural values, beliefs, and experiences. So, finding that

pre-service teachers do not engage in such a practice means that they have not learned the necessary skills to teach critically about social justice.

The implications for participants lack of positioning are important, not only for themselves to better understand the social world, but for their future success as agents of social change. As stated by Pinnegar et al. (2011), examining positionality has the potential to connect theory and practice of social justice education, as supported by the above findings. As my analysis indicates, participants' lack of positionality awareness directly reflected their inability to connect vague concepts of social justice to practical strategies that might benefit their future students who will likely have backgrounds and experiences that vary.

This chapter related the findings of this study to the research objectives by detailing pre-service teachers' understanding of their roles and responsibilities as educators, pre-service teachers' understanding of social justice related concepts, and pre-service teacher positionality. In doing so, I provided a basis for Chapter Six, which points to recommendations for improving teacher education programs, and subsequently increasing pre-service teachers' understanding of social justice issues in education.

Chapter 6: "Future Progress": Implications and Recommendations for Teacher Education

Throughout this thesis, I explored pre-service teachers' understandings of social justice and social justice education. This chapter includes a reiteration of the study, the research question and objectives, and how they are met through the methods I chose and my analysis of the data I collected. I then provide recommendations for improving pre-service teachers' understandings of social justice and social justice in education, and discuss the necessity of further research in the area of social justice and teacher education.

Study Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore pre-service teachers' understandings of and experiences with social justice concepts and issues as they relate to education. A social justice and education literature review and grounded theory methodology were used to guide the research process, and open-ended surveys, administered online, were used to collect information from pre-service teachers at Lakehead University. A reiteration of the research question and objectives is provided in what follows.

Research Question: How do pre-service Bachelor of Education students understand social justice concepts such as oppression, power, privilege, equity, and equality as they begin their teacher education programs, and what do they know about the expectations of the Ontario Ministry of Education of teachers in relation to social justice in education and curriculum?

Research Objectives

1. *To examine pre-service teachers' perceptions on their roles and responsibilities as educators in relation to social justice issues in education and as expected by the Ontario Ministry of Education.*

Key Findings: Most participants felt a perceived moral responsibility to engage in social justice education, and often, they felt obligated to provide social justice education for the good of their future students. Although social justice education is a mandate of current Ontario education policy, participant responses reflected a view that providing social justice education is a moral responsibility, rather than only a mandate in various provincial curriculum documents.

2. ***To investigate pre-service teachers' understandings of social justice in relation to education, including concepts such as oppression, power, privilege, equity, and equality.***

   Key Findings: Throughout my analysis of the data, I found a clear lack of engagement with the key topics of social justice as examined in the literature review above: oppression, privilege, equity, and power. Participants' understandings of such concepts were guided by problematic discourses, namely, individualism and tolerance. There was also a lack of engagement with the concept of positionality, meaning that participants did not discuss their positionality and experience as informing their views as educators, despite the majority of participants belonging to dominant social groups.

3. ***To identify specific recommendations for administrators and professors in the faculty of education that would enhance social justice pedagogy of instructors who teach pre-service teachers.***

   Findings: The findings of research objectives one and two led to two important recommendations for practice in teacher education programs, and are discussed in the following section.

Recommendations for Practice

My analysis highlights a general consensus from participants that social justice has a place in schools and classrooms. However, it is clear that participants' understanding of social justice education lacks real world implications and practical strategies for fostering a social justice framework. Instead, participants' understandings and views of social justice remain abstract as indicated, for example, in their wishes to create "fair" and "inclusive" classrooms. They indicated that this is something they hope they can achieve, but they lack the understanding of social justice concepts of power, privilege, oppression, and equity necessary to achieve such a goal.

As found in 1998 by Levine-Rasky, "problematic beliefs about equity education" (p. 94) continue to surface in pre-service teachers today. Despite teacher education programs that mandate the inclusion of teachings in social justice, pre-services teachers' understandings remain shallow, and heavily based on dominant ideologies, specifically, discourses of individualism and tolerance. Such ideologies perpetuate inequities as they keep hidden systemic and institutional relations of power that maintain privilege for dominant groups and oppression of minoritized groups.

Throughout this research, I have explored the understandings and experiences of pre-service teachers pertaining to social justice issues and social justice education. Doing so has provided a basis from which to identify implications for bachelor of education programs in the teaching of social justice issues in education. Based on my analysis, I would argue that modifications to current bachelor of education programs have the potential to deepen pre-service teachers' understanding of social justice, social justice education, and their positionalities, so that they may better serve the needs of their future students. Hence, I offer the following two

recommendations to increase social justice understandings among pre-service teachers. They are: providing a course specifically focusing on critical pedagogy and social justice, and role and responsibility training within curriculum and instruction courses.

Critical pedagogy course. Currently, teacher education programs, such as the one at Lakehead University, consist of foundational courses that include some form of social justice education. The findings of this study are congruent with those of Schmidt et al. (2012) that teacher education programs tend to promote tolerance and acceptance through anti-oppression education, instead of fostering a critical lens of social justice. Although tolerance may influence students positively on a micro level, tolerance does not require that people critically examine social justice issues for their structural and perpetual presence in society, and so, inequities are never actually addressed. Such a framework was seen in participants of this study in their conceptualization of equality, which neglects to acknowledge oppression and power as systemic, institutionalized, and resistant to change.

I argue that by adding a course that allows pre-service teachers to examine power, oppression, privilege, and equity in an historical and contemporary context that is not exclusive to education, pre-service teachers will be better able to situate themselves within social systems of power, allowing them to engage in ongoing, critical and self-reflective processes. Jakubowski and Visano (2002) argue that the reformation of beliefs and attitudes based on introspection on the part of pre-service teachers can be a difficult and painful process. Such a process requires that pre-service teachers examine their social positioning, associated power and privilege, educational upbringing, and subsequently their roles and responsibilities as teachers. A course

allowing pre-service teachers to engage in such a difficult process can drastically impact their understanding of, and commitment to social justice education.

I propose that a critical pedagogy course, such as that which is offered in Lakehead University's Master of Education program, be adopted by the Bachelor of Education program as a foundational and required course. Pre-service teachers' understanding of social justice can be deepened in such a course, as societal inequities are examined in a context that considers greater social structures than schools, and places a focus on power and oppression, rather than practical teaching skills. A critical pedagogy course allows pre-service teachers the opportunity to reflect on their roles and responsibilities as teachers as more than providing academic instruction. Learning about power, oppression, privilege, and equity can open pre-service teachers to understanding that as teachers, they hold power and that despite their personal views on social justice, everything they teach or fail to teach, informs students about what types of knowledge are valued. In order for such a course to have a measurable impact on pre-service teachers' understanding of social justice, a critical pedagogy course should not be optional because this sends the message that social justice is an add-on for educators. Such a message supports dominant ideology that all people are, indeed, equal, and so it not essential for teachers to learn more than they already know about social justice.

Role, responsibility, and curriculum training. As found in this study, policy and mandates pertaining to curriculum documents are unknown or misunderstood by many pre-service teachers. However, such documents illuminate the need to move about from dominant ideologies of social justice education. For example, *Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* states that, "Acceptance goes beyond tolerance, in that it implies a positive and

welcoming attitude" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 86), and *Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools,* posits that, "tolerance is not enough" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 29). The problem with such documents, however, is that they do not provide pre-service teachers with information on they can increase social justice awareness of students beyond being tolerant of others. Although both documents discuss accepting others who may be different from them, and citing that tolerance is not an effective way to achieve equality, the documents do not mandate that teachers personally know, let alone teach about, power and privilege inequities that have caused a push for tolerance. I would conjecture that, unfortunately, such unawareness does not tend to shift to awareness when pre-service teachers enter the workforce. An important finding in this study is that participants neglected to make connections between their roles as teachers in relation to teaching about social justice as supported by mandates of the curriculum and of specific subject areas, both in overall and specific curriculum expectations.

Pre-service teachers' analysis of social justice topics in curriculum documents has the potential to begin discussion of the common misconceptions of social justice that are held by society and within education. Although Ontario curriculum documents are aligned with pre-service teachers' views and understandings of social justice (that is, the texts lack critical engagement with issues of power and oppression in favour of blanket statements pertaining to social justice, equity, and acceptance), these documents can provide a jumping off point to raise awareness of social justice issues that largely go unseen and unnamed by educators, especially those belonging to dominant social groups.

Although curriculum documents should not be taken as law for all teachers to follow without question, I do believe in the power of curriculum to support new teachers in their quest

for achieving socially just classrooms and schools. Curriculum documents pertaining to social justice initiates are part of our educational history, and as such, should be examined by teachers and students for their portrayal of social inequities, and how inequities should be addressed. For many pre-service teachers, the type of work needed to implement a social justice framework comes with personal risk (Allen, 2008). As such, teaching of curriculum and policy related to social justice can serve to support pre-service teachers in their quest to understanding the place of social justice in schools, and their roles and rights as teachers to question systems of oppression, including schools, within schools.

Recommendations for Further Research

In the quest for improving social justice education so that injustices of educators are minimized, research on social justice and social justice education is crucial, and can be approached through various avenues. The findings of this study point to opportunities for future research in the area of social justice and education that could positively impact pre-service teachers' understanding of social justice and enhance their teaching practices.

Further research related to pre-service positionality would strengthen researchers' knowledge of how pre-service teachers' understandings of social justice are influenced by their positionalities, and subsequently how they influence pedagogy related to social justice. As found in this study, most participants were found to be influenced by discourses of individualism and tolerance, directly connected to their positionalities as privileged individuals, and so, more research on how these translate into practice is needed.

In order to better serve the needs of diverse groups of students in Ontario, I recommend that research be conducted on teachers who have continued education at the university level in social justice education and critical pedagogy, for example, at the Master's level. Such research

could shed light onto the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of further training in social justice education on pre-service teacher pedagogy, and could be used to compare Master's level social justice education with professional level social justice education.

Conclusion

My research findings contribute to existing knowledge of pre-service teachers' understandings of social justice as it applies to education and their future pedagogy. This information adds to scholarship in relation to social justice, and subsequently provides a jumping off point for teacher education institutions to better provide pre-service teachers with social justice teaching as it applies to their roles and responsibilities as educators.

Informed by scholarship on social justice concepts in education, and guided by a grounded theory approach, my research highlights the voices of some pre-service teachers, and contributes to an understanding of how social justice education is perceived by pre-service teachers who are preparing to enter the schools where they will gain practical experience and eventually teach. My analysis holds great potential to stimulate discussion related to policy and theory-to-practice in teacher education programs, including how pre-service teachers understand and interact with social justice education and curricula while beginning their teacher education programs. It may also provide a starting point for researchers, teacher educators, and teacher education institutions to begin to examine pre-service teachers' interaction and engagement with Ministry documents, and course material pertaining to social justice.

Concerned with the issue of pre-service teachers' beginning understanding of social justice as it applies to their pedagogy, my research illuminates a lack of critical self-examination in pre-service teachers' knowledge and identity, including their roles and responsibilities as educators. Moreover, my research amplifies the voices of pre-service teachers as they begin to

engage in social justice education and the potential personal barriers, ideological perspectives, wishes, and assets they hold when attempting to engage in social justice learning and teaching while navigating through systems of education that replicate inequality and inequity. Teacher education programs need to be more attentive to the teaching of social justice issues so that pre-service teachers are prepared to challenge such inequities in their future work as educators. In order for pre-service teachers to critically engage in social justice education, they must be willing to look and teach beyond a mere tolerance of others, because, for educators, mere tolerance is not enough.

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Appendix A

Initial Introductory Email to Potential Participants

Dear Bachelor of Education Student,

Hello. I would like to invite you to participate in a research project exploring your experiences in relation to social justice and social justice education. This study is part of my Master's thesis research at Lakehead University. The project is entitled, "*Acknowledging, Understanding, and Teaching: Pre-service Teachers' Experiences with Social Justice Issues in Education*". The purpose of this study is to gain information on Bachelor of Education students' experiences with social justice concepts.

As a Bachelor of Education student, your experiences and knowledge are essential components in this project. Your participation will be an opportunity for you to reflect upon your experiences and understandings of social justice and social justice education while beginning the Bachelor of Education program at Lakehead University.

Your commitment in this project would involve the completion of one 15-30 minute online survey. The online survey will be emailed to your Lakehead University email account and will be accessible during the months of September and October 2013.

As I gather information from the surveys, I may attempt to follow up with some participants to further clarify survey question responses, or deepen my understanding of some responses. Those participants will be invited to respond to follow-up questions via email.

Data collected from the surveys will be stored in secure computer files. Pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity of participants throughout the research process, including any presentations or publications that may follow this project. The findings of this project will be made available to me at my request upon the completion of the project. The completed thesis will be available at the Education Library at Lakehead University.

My research has been approved by Lakehead University's Research Ethics Board and follows a strict ethical guideline to ensure confidentiality, anonymity and your safety. If you agree to participate, you may choose to decline to answer any question or withdraw at any time. More information on ethics and research procedures will be offered upon request and will be provided in the email along with the link to the online survey.

If you have any questions pertaining to this project, please respond to this email.

Thank you,

Shannon Tersigni

Appendix B

Official Survey Email and Survey Link to Participants

Dear Bachelor of Education Student,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project exploring your experiences in relation to social justice and social justice education. This thesis entitled, " *Acknowledging, Understanding, and Teaching: Pre-service Teachers' Experiences with Social Justice Issues in Education*." The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of pre-service teachers' experiences with social justice education as you begin your Bachelor of Education program.

To participate in this project, please click on the link below to access the survey:

[insert survey link here]

The survey will take approximately 15-30 minutes to complete.
Upon clicking on the survey link above, the first survey question ask for your consent in participating in this project.

To ensure your anonymity, data collected will be kept confidential and pseudonyms will be used in my thesis and any associated writing and presentations. There is no foreseeable risk, harm or inconvenience to you to be involved in this study. You participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, as well as decline to answer any questions. Data will remain stored at Lakehead University for five years and then will be destroyed.

The findings of this project will be made available to you at your request upon the completion of the project. The completed thesis will be available at the Education Library at Lakehead University.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me, Shannon Tersigni, via email (sktersig@lakeheadu.ca), or direct your inquiries to my faculty supervisor, Dr. Gerald Walton (gwalton@lakeheadu.ca). If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team please contact Sue Wright, at the Research Ethics Board (phone: (807) 343-8283, email: research@lakeheadu.ca).

Thank you,

Shannon Tersigni

Appendix C

Online Consent for Participants

Clicking the "Accept" button below indicates that I have read the accompanying explanation of "*Acknowledging, Understanding, and Teaching: Pre-service Teachers' Experiences with Social Justice Issues in Education.*" It also indicates that I agree to participate in this study by Shannon Tersigni, and that I understand the following ethical considerations:

- My participation is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw at any time.
- I have to right to choose to decline to answer any question.
- There is no apparent risk of physical or psychological harm.
- All information gathered about me will be kept confidential.
- My identity will be protected by the use of pseudonyms in this thesis and any associated writing and presentations.
- The data will be securely stored at Lakehead University for five years.
- My participation will remain anonymous in any publication or presentation of research findings.
- The findings of this project will be made available to me at my request upon the completion of the project. The completed thesis will be available at the Education Library at Lakehead University.

[insert "Accept" and "Decline" buttons]

Appendix D

Online Survey Questions

Demographic questions:
6. *Age*
7. *Gender*
8. *Sexuality*
9. *Ethnicity*
10. *Religious/Spiritual affiliations*

Open-ended questions:
11. *What is your current understanding of social justice education?*
12. *What do you perceive as your professional responsibilities as a teacher in relation to social justice?*
13. *Do you think social justice education matters? If so, to whom? Why?*
14. *Do you envision being involved in social justice issues when you become a teacher? If so, how do you think this might look?*
15. *Have you ever felt oppressed or privileged based on your gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, language, or socioeconomic status?*
    a. *If so, how did you deal with the experience?*
    b. *Do you think these experiences influence your understanding of social justice in education?*

Appendix E

Follow-Up Email and Questions

Dear Research Participant:

Thank you for participating in my thesis research project: **Acknowledging, Understanding, and Teaching: Pre-service Teachers' Experiences with Social Justice Issues in Education.**
Your insight into social justice issues in education is extremely important to understanding how social justice issues are experienced by future educators.

You are receiving this email because you indicated that you were willing to be contacted for follow-up information based on your responses to the online survey sent via email at the beginning of October. Your continued participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. I would like to remind you that your continued participation is completely voluntary and will be kept confidential. This is the final step in data collection for this study so you will not be contacted again.
You will have until November 10th to complete and email your responses. If you are willing to continue, please respond to the questions below by replying to this email. *If you wish to review your answers to the initial survey, please let me know and I will email them to you.

Participant specific questions (with pseudonyms):

Daisy: How does promoting equality uphold social justice in education?
Elaine: What does a tolerant classroom look like?
Mitch: Why do you think social justice has a 'bad reputation' in education?
Ellen: How does promoting equality uphold social justice in education?
Tyler: What does a tolerant classroom look like?
How does a tolerant classroom impact students belonging to minoritized groups?
Jake: How does promoting equality uphold social justice in education?
James: What does equitable education look like in practice?
Kamil: How does promoting equality uphold social justice in education? How does involvement in charitable organizations influence social justice initiatives?
Caden: What does equitable education look like in practice?

General questions:

What types of social justice situations do you anticipate encountering as a teacher?

What types of barriers do you anticipate encountering when attempting social justice work in your future schools?

What do you know about 'social justice' and/or 'social justice education in the Ontario curriculum?

Based on your own experiences with oppression (or lack of), how do you intend on dealing with situations in which students in your school are being oppressed?

It is free time in your grade 3 classroom and a group of 4 students have chosen the reading center. During recess, your volunteer brings to your attention a book that has been drawn in. Upon further investigation, you notice that the page that has been marked depicts a family with two moms. One of the moms has been scribbled on and the word 'bad' has been written over it. You know the 4 students that were at center but don't know who used that book. You are aware that all 4 students have a mom and a dad. You also know that one student in your class had 2 fathers. How do you deal with the situation?

If you have any questions pertaining to the questions above, or any other aspect of this study, please do not hesitate to contact me via email.
Again, thank you for donating your valuable time and energy to take part in this study. Your commitment is so greatly appreciated.

Shannon Tersigni